

Sept 73

# Chimaera

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*Nottingham & Derby C.H.E. Newsletter*

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

The General Secretary,  
28, Kennedy St.  
MANCHESTER.  
M2 4BG  
061 228 1985

## LONDON INFORMATION CENTRE

22, Great Windmill St.  
LONDON.  
W1.  
01 437 7363

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### Affiliated to:

The National Council For Civil Liberties.  
The National Federation Of Homofile Organisations.

CHIMAERA

September, 1973

(Notts. & Derby C.H.E. Newsletter)

By now summer holidays are probably a thing of the past. We have had a marvellous selection of post-cards from many of our friends in the Group. Strangely enough, all very artistic views of the country! In the meantime here I am in my rural retreat hoping to come up with some gems of wit and wisdom.

We've had a fairly active summer visiting the Pavilion Club every Thursday, thus gaining an extension of Ladies's Night until December. In general they have been very pleasant nights out. Thanks to those gentlemen of Shardlow who went out of their way to make us genuinely welcome.

Coming along is an all-out effort to help the National Education Campaign. This blankets September to December. Our own thin end of the wedge is the forthcoming meeting at Bishop Lonsdale College in Derby. Perhaps we may get some response also from the 16 other colleges to whom we sent leaflets, etc. last term.

For the less militant we hope that we have incorporated social evenings to suit you. Coffee evenings we find not only relaxing, but profitable for Group finances. Ian was seen smiling happily after the last one. May I say once more that the Committee would welcome any offers of homes for coffee evenings or any useful suggestions for the future programme events.

We must also make a point of visiting the new club opening in Nottingham on 17th November. If it is providing all the facilities advertised, it should be well worth more than one visit.

- Heather.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 26th September. Social evening. Mario's, Nottingham, 8 p.m.

Tuesday, 9th October. Meeting with Nottingham Samaritans. Albert Hall Institute, 8 p.m.

Tuesday, 16th October. Denis Lemon on "The Gay Press", Albert Hall Institute, 8 p.m.

Monday, 22nd October. Bishop Lonsdale Meeting, Derby. Time to be announced.

Friday, 26th October. Inter-group Social Meeting. Mario's, Stanford St. 8 p.m.

Friday, 2nd November. Music Quiz and Coffee Evening. Ian and David's House. 8 p.m.

Friday, 23rd November. Games evening. (All your childish games, please) Wheathills House, 8 p.m.

Saturday, 15th December. National Council at Liverpool. Social evening planned on board a hired cruise boat. Tickets £1.00 each. Free overnight accommodation. (It has cost £300 to hire this boat!). We would like names as soon as possible of those wishing to attend.

Alternate Mondays from 17th September. Dog & Partridge, 8 p.m.

Alternate Thursdays designated as C.H.E. Shardlow meetings, to keep up Ladies' Night attendance. These commence:

20th September.

4th October

18th October.

N.B. 1st November. This one is important.

15th November.

29th November.

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Secretary's Address: H. Stafford, 3 Wheathills House, Brun Lane, Kirk Langley, Derbyshire. Phone: Kirk Langley 502

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GENERAL NEWS

David's Car Rally was most successful. The weather was atrocious. Six car loads of variously cursing C.H.E. members and friends drove madly round the countryside getting lost, some more lost than others, but all reaching the White Hart at W. Hallam well before closing time. Many thanks, David and Andrew, although I can't agree that Enoch Powell drank at that particular spot. I also had a superb tour around the grounds of a cement factory before my passengers and a set of railway tracks convinced me that I was wrong!

The Friends Meeting House at Derby is indeed friendly and broad-minded. Our meeting with Paul Temperton brought an attendance of sixteen and near disaster. Penny-pinching to the end, we decided to give him the Manchester copy of the Newsletter. How fortunate that Derek opened it to check on a date. Guess who had got all the dud pages! Robin to the rescue with a full edition. I was intrigued to note that the two meetings in the House that night were billed as 'Homosexual Equality' writ large and the Aetherius Society, whom I believe claim to have contact with other planets.

Many thanks for the good turn-out to Mrs. Felicity Harding's discussion evening on 8th August. Counselling is something we as a Group have not attempted to do and probably a wise decision at the moment after hearing about the work involved. C.H.E.'s role was discussed enthusiastically - to put it nicely - not to mention the Samaritan Services. I hope in the future it will prove to be a useful contact for both us and Mrs. Harding.

The Pavilion evenings already mentioned.

You'll no doubt be agog to learn that Roger is the undisputed Tiddley-Wink Champion of Notts. and Derby. C.H.E. So flushed with success is he that he is prepared to challenge any group champion for the National C.H.E. Tiddley-Winks title - offers via the Editor, please, (3 Wheathills House, Brun Lane, Kirk Langley). No less than twelve of us fought it out with help from the kitten! Ian is now thinking of taking up golf.

Twenty-five people turned out for the combined C.H.E./Night Off Meeting. Bill, Ian and David did most of the work for this - thanks, boys. (Hope the tent didn't leak, Bill!)

Preparations under way for the Sheffield Disco. Thanks for the maps, Dave - very thoughtful of you. It has been good to see some of the Sheffield Group making it to the Pavilion on Thursday nights, too.

1. The Pavilion Club is open to women on every Thursday until Christmas EXCEPT 18th OCTOBER - when the club is closed for a committee meeting.
2. The Pavilion Club is now also open to women on the following Music Nights - all of which take place on Tuesdays.
  - 18th September - "Tales from the Vienna Woods"
  - 9th October - "At Home and Away". Music written in exile.
  - 30th October - "There's no business like show business" a popular programme including a quiz.
  - 20th November - "History of Jazz"
  - 11th December - "Words and Music"
  - 18th December - "Christmas Concert"

Scratch!

We believe that Miss M. Phogbound has transferred her services to the Pavilion Club; what other explanation can account for the following item in the Club's latest bulletin. Referring to the Thursday Ladies' Nights, it reads:

'The later August meetings were not as well attended as we had been led to expect . . .'

The bulletin was printed for distribution to members before the two meetings which took place in the last half of August and unfortunately Miss Phogbound's prognostication lacked her usual accuracy.

Having attended some Friday and Wednesday meetings at the Pavilion Club at which the members were so sparsely distributed that communication took place via loud-hailers, I can well understand that the Club's Newsletter should refer with enthusiasm to the 'success' of an attendance of 16 at their first Tuesday Music Night. You might therefore consider what glittering superlatives we could apply to the attendance of 35 at the Ladies' Night of 23rd August.

In fact, at the time of writing (24th August) the average attendance at these

GENERAL NEWS - continuedYour Committee in Session

In order to achieve a closer rapport between the committee and group members, we have decided to give a brief summary of the last committee meeting, at which our future programme was set out.

The Secretary reported that she had contacted speakers who were prepared to talk on the following topics:

- (a) Hair-nets can be sexy
- (b) The Wombat in my life
- (c) Knee-caps through the ages

All these were dismissed as being too controversial - even for us.

It was then remarked that C.H.E. was feeling the effects of inflation, since the Autumn Roman Orgy would have to be cancelled owing to the rising price of grapes. A fund-raising Jumble Sale was therefore proposed and in a sudden flush of eagerness, we immediately ransacked the house to see whether we could find any contributions of our own. This resulted in the unearthing of half a loo brush, a dog-chewed Monopoly board minus Park Lane, a decomposing pear and a 5 amp fuse (blown). All these were outshone by the generous donation of an abstract sculpture entitled "Delirium in Basford" carefully fashioned from the welded remnants of old KY tubes.

The discussion on whether the Christmas Party was to be in fancy dress was decided when three committee members said that they would insist on coming dressed in large detergent packets - as Bold, Omo and Fairy Snow. This prospect was speedily quashed.

The secretary drew our attention to some of the services now provided by Manchester HQ. We were especially impressed with the C.H.E. telescopic umbrella (The Temperton Stroller) which, when unfurled, exposes a crest of limp, clenched fists over handbags rampant on a lavender background.

The eternal problem of publicity was raised once more - but novel inspiration was unforthcoming. The meeting came to a sudden conclusion when one member disinterred the idea of a balloon race (with hot air provided by the C.H.E. Executive Committee) and was quickly silenced by a direct hit from a hurled tiara.

"The Role of C.H.E." by Bill Keeton.

Recent events have persuaded me that we in C.H.E. have mistakenly taken for granted a certain level of understanding between us concerning the Campaign's role. As a result, many important questions that should have been raised have gone by default. Since the function of C.H.E. is crucial to us, that's the point I'd like to discuss.

Technically speaking of course, C.H.E. is a typical pressure group. It's an organisation created by people with a common interest. It's role is to formulate, articulate and press for the demands of that special interest, and where necessary to see through changes in the law. In this respect our function is no different from any other pressure group whether it's the A.A. or a trade union. But repeating this purely technical function doesn't take us very far since those people C.H.E. seeks to represent differ fundamentally from the membership of any other pressure group (there are gays in all these groups, of course, but that's not the reason they've combined). To identify this distinction a suitable analogy can be made with membership of the A.A. Car ownership is associated with the accumulation of social credit; being gay brings social disapproval, and to "come out" risks intensifying that disapproval. There is, however, a more basic distinction. Car ownership is a matter of choice, it may improve your life, it may not - and that's a matter of opinion - certainly you can live a full life without a car. There's no such choice or opinion relating to sex, one has certain sexual preferences and nothing can alter that. Furthermore, one can't live a full life without expressing one's sexual desires, and there's no escaping them or the consequences of suppressing them. Therein lies the essential difference between C.H.E. and similar organisations and all other pressure groups; it's something we ignore to our cost when we consider the proper role of C.H.E. Therefore we can't behave as a strictly typical pressure group spending all our resources on efforts to change the law. We need to open up society by assisting in the creation of more areas of social activity where we can behave just the way we are, gay. It would seem to me therefore, that C.H.E. has a dual role to

GENERAL NEWS - continued

1. Intensification of gay demands on government.

2. Broadening the areas of gay social activity.

If C.H.E. and other gay organisations can grasp this point it improves the chances of reaching the vast majority of gays. It will increase our opportunities of contacting those who still suffer having to pretend they're straight, and of convincing those of us trapped in the bar/disco syndrome that there's much more to life.

It's often argued that if the bar/disco life-style satisfies some gays, it's their choice, and what's C.H.E. got to do with it? I find this ghetto mentality not merely depressing but insulting to the intelligence and courage of those of us who have "come out", are "partly out", or just emerging from the cocoon, whether they're part of the bar/disco set, in C.H.E. or relate to both. No one, gay or straight, has so confined an outlook as to be satisfied with a bar/disco life to the exclusion of everything else. What this view tends to ignore is that for the straight, bar and discos are merely an extension of a total personality, whereas for the gay they're the only places they can be themselves - or almost. The mind boggles at the confused logic in this way of thinking. It implies, for example, that gays prefer sex in cottages since a lot of it goes on there. The point we must grasp is that the wide world outside these constricted forms of mere "entertainment" is closed to the great majority of us. It thus becomes the function of C.H.E. and similar organisations to convince all gays that we need their help in opening up that world - no one else will do it for us.

- B.K.

In Aid of the Lonely Gay - by Bill Keeton

If we're to believe the gay media, the attitude of the Samaritans and the quality and value of the assistance to gay people seeking their help differs from area to area. I understand we need look no further than Derby and Nottingham to find an example of this. Nevertheless, the general impression I receive is that at best the help offered is unsatisfactory. In an attempt to determine what Nottingham Samaritans offer in the way of help to gays with a problem, and to discover their method and place of referrals, I approached them in the guise of a worried gay possessed by a compulsion to "talk to someone".

The character and quality of the voice answering my desperate phone call convinced me that I'd mistakenly dialed the local Conservative Association (no disrespect to prominent members of the group intended) and that I should instantly switch my inquiry to seeking the venue of the next cheese and wine party. To those used to associating with the social group characterised by its use of what Auntie Beeb used to call "basic Southern English", it may have been a welcome sound, but to someone desperate to "open his heart" - well-meaning though the voice sounded - it would have been off-putting. "Would I like to speak to a man or a woman?" the voice said.

"A man" I replied - I might as well get a bit of pleasure out of this. The answer would also give me an idea of the variety of counselling available.

"Sorry, we haven't a man" (Pity). "Would you prefer to speak to Joan or myself?"

"It doesn't matter".

"Would you like to discuss the matter now".

"Yes, very much".

"Over the phone?"

"No!"

Having given my Christian name and received directions, I proceeded.

I entered by the blue door off the street, rang the bell on the blue door immediately to my right (was I right about the Conservative Association?) and found before me, in a narrow corridor, the lady I took to be my contact on the phone. After being asked once more if I'd prefer Joan (she must be something) and once again expressing no special preference (after all, there were no men) I was guided into the "Little Room" (?) to my left. The information that I was homosexual and alone solicited the response, "Well, don't worry, there are lots more like you", and in a tone of voice more suitable I felt as a reaction to the knowledge that I'd got cancer. I'd have collapsed on hearing the phrase "Gay is good" in this place. Anyway, in the ensuing discussion I felt myself undergoing an unspecified selection procedure. I began to feel that I was conforming to

GENERAL NEWS - continued

some preconceived view of the "acceptable" homosexual. Though I've no tangible evidence to support this view, my memory is of being aware that had I been a "screaming queen" or "rough trade" or a suicide potential, my interviewer would have been incapable of understanding or coping with the situation. I've since learnt that had I been in any of these categories there was nowhere within the Samaritans' immediate structure to refer me. As it was I met the necessary preconditions, and in a manner so clandestine MI5 could learn a thing or two from it, I was - eventually - referred to an organisation familiar to all of us.

What, then, are my conclusions?

1. Initial contact is vital; at present it's inadequate and needs to be seriously thought over.
2. There's no one there to whom any type of gay could relate.
3. There's an attitude of gay being anything but good.
4. There seems to be a preconceived notion of what gay should be.
5. There's a completely inadequate structure for referring gays.

I don't like making criticisms without offering alternatives, so here goes.

These are in the nature of suggestions offered for general consideration. The order of mention should not be confused with any preference on my part.

1. We could take up Samaritans' recent public appeal by offering ourselves as counsellors for gay people with problems.
2. We could create a Friending Group either as part of C.H.E. or preferably, in co-operation with other gay organisations in the vicinity.
3. We could enter into negotiations with both Samaritans and the Council of Social Services with a view to becoming their place for referrals.

Neither of these suggestions is mutually exclusive, and in discussing them better ones may be forthcoming. What we must always be conscious of, however, is that dealing with people's problems whether real or imagined, needs both a sincere desire to help and recourse to expert advice. The latter is readily available; but the former demands a serious personal commitment.

- B.K.

S.O.S.

Can anyone help with lifts to meetings? If so, please contact the Secretary, or any committee member. Situation becoming urgent!

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I.Q. TEST FOR PROSPECTIVE E/C DELEGATE

Name:

Date of Birth:

Date of Death:

Age:

Sex:

Nationality:

Address:

Toothpaste:

Socks:

Colour of

A. Eyes

D. Teeth

B. Hair

E. Fingernails

C. Nose

F. Car

Men: (Names and Phone Nos.)

Women: (Names and Phone Nos.)

play in:



GENERAL NEWS - continuedAppeal from Jackie Forster (E.C. Member)

The newly formed Public Relations Media Group was convened at a recent E.C. meeting in London. We are asked if we can raise two Information Officers from the group, ideally one man and one woman. Volunteers needed please.

Their function would be to establish good relations with the local press and mass media. Also to send a monthly report to the P.R.M.G. of happenings covered by TV, Press, radio in the area, either from local or other actions. This valuable pioneer work should provide an interesting challenge!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Heather,

Just a line or two to say how very much I have enjoyed this month's Newsletter; it is one of the most interesting things I have read for a long time. I like the way that the humour has been introduced into it, also it does not lack the serious side of things - all very well put together, I think.

But a word or two about madam MYOPIA PHOGBOUND, Astrologer.

I feel that her vision must be a little clouded, but also I feel that she has the right idea, if at some time she could stretch her abilities to giving individual predictions. I'm sure it would be a good way of raising funds, say 20p a go. I'm sure we are all bent on raising more funds for C.H.E.

Also, I am very pleased to hear about Walter's Steinway piano??

Note, Publicity Subcommittee. Most of the ideas seem to be good ones except: advertising for members (I do not like that idea).

Also, Mailing Shots.

Again thank you for interesting paper.

Yours very truly, John Norton.

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Thanks for the Newsletter which we found hilarious. No wonder that Manchester H.Q. think it's the best one produced! I hope we see you at our Disco and look forward to hearing from you soon.

- Dave Brown (Sheffield)

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With reference to the letter by R.H. in the previous Newsletter, especially His or Her last paragraph.

It appears to me that She is anti-Night Off as well as anti-Coffee drinking. To my knowledge there hasn't been any whist playing at any meeting and when Barry has invited the GIRLS along they have found - to quote Heather - that "in winter the weather is too hazardous to travel, in summer it's too nice to bother!" So if the girls can't be bothered, why should I. The only way Night Off can be changed is by the GIRLS coming along, showing a face, making comments, speaking their minds.

So if She (R.H.) would care to come along we would be glad to see Her. If She doesn't like coffee, there's always beer, but the group is more than Coffee, Beer and talk; it's just nice to get away from Mario's and Shardlow, Yes, just nice to get away from the meat market.

- H.E.C.

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Letter from "Campaign for Homosexual Equality"

19th July 1973

NFHO: An Announcement

The Executive Committee of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality decided at its meeting on 15 July to disaffiliate from the National Federation of Homophile

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR - continuedLetter from C.H.E. - continued

The following reasons have led to this decision:

1. NFHO has failed to fulfil the "clearing house" function for which it was set up. Its own communications with member organisations have been poor and there have been repeated failures to consult, most recently over fixing the date and place of a meeting called on 23 June to discuss "improving" communications.

2. NFHO has become a means of creating dissension within the homophile movement. We believe it would be better to make a fresh start towards co-operation between the various homophile groups. The excellent direct co-operation between CHE and SMG illustrates the sort of relations that we feel are more fruitful.

3. The CHE members conference at Morecambe in April 1973, to which the EC holds itself responsible, decided that CHE should remain in NFHO only if it confines itself to the provision of common administrative facilities and of a discussion forum for member groups. That condition has not been fulfilled; what is more, the administrative facilities have proved wholly unsatisfactory. We are therefore mandated to withdraw from NFHO.

CHE is approaching the other remaining member groups of NFHO, offering to keep them directly informed of our activities and to co-operate wherever it is appropriate.

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