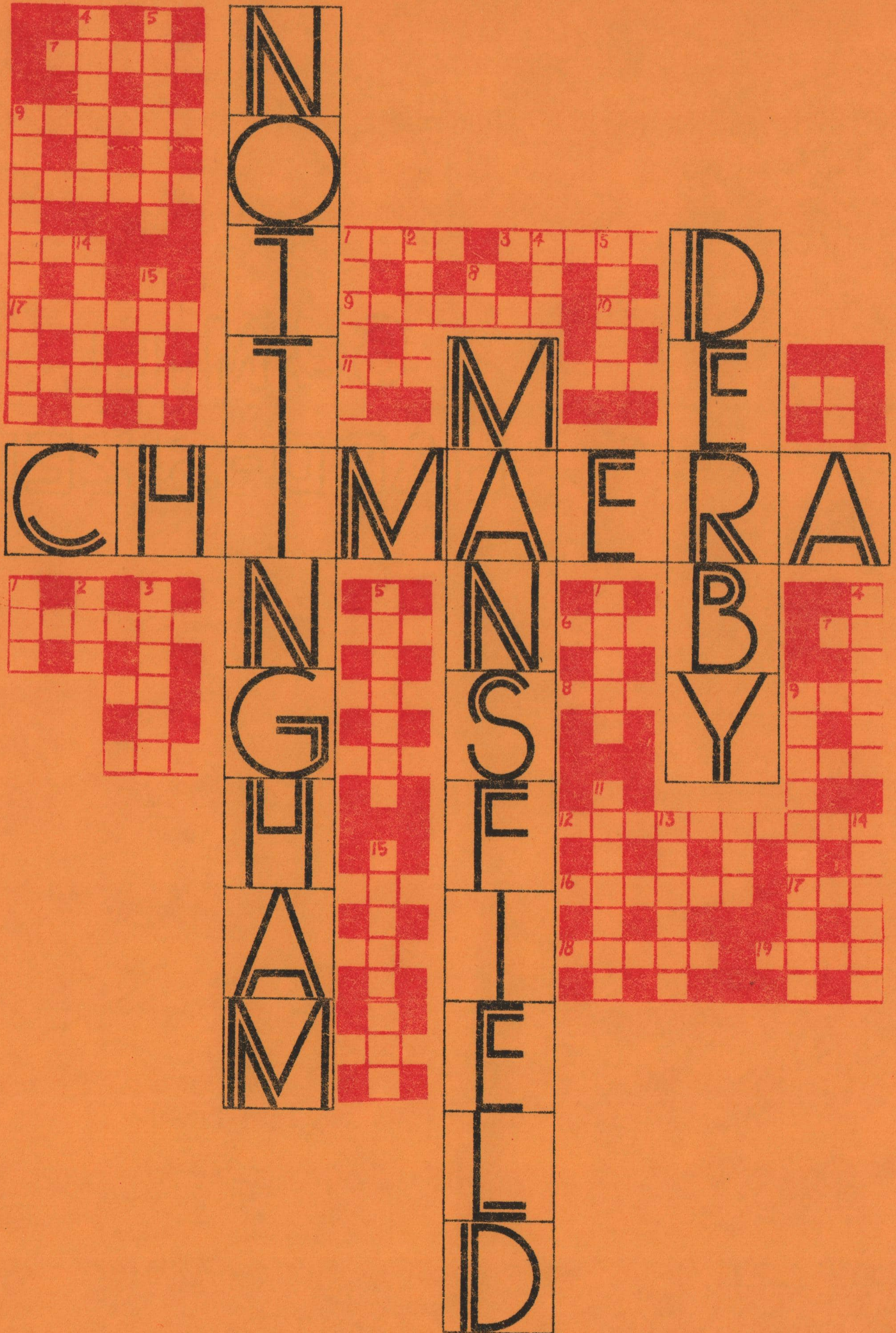


July 1976



NEWSLETTER FOR THE MANSFIELD, DERBY AND NOTTINGHAM CHE GROUPS

Once upon a time in the pre-history of Derby CHE; before we were even Notts/Derby CHE (in fact whilst we were still Nottingham CHE) a newly elected member of that committee had AN IDEA. To get everyone too frightened, too housebound too poor or even too idle to come to meetings, we should send our meetings to them. Instead of a printed list (very small) of meeting dates we should have a real news letter. What a brilliant idea. NO ONE in the country had a REAL newsletter - only the national bulletin.

Then came the stumbling block. What should we call this new infant? It had to have a name that was different, eye-catching, simple and above all EASY TO PRONOUNCE. Battle was joined. Brain storms erupted within a 30 mile radius of Nottingham, but no one could find the answer.

Eventually - in a short burst of true democracy, the then Editor casually flipped through her hard-backed, large-print-for-easy-reading copy of Greek mythology for beginners (in the original Attic Greek). Lo and behold! She found it. Chimaera. Pronounce KY/ME/RA. Meaning:-

a) A fabulous fire-breathing monster with the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a dragon.

b) A vain and foolish fancy. A creature of the imagination.

Thus it was and is and thus may it remain.

Heather.

(And I hope that shuts up all those prats who keep on asking me what it means - your typist.)

CONTENTS

The Programmepages 2-3

Contact Addressespage 4

Oh my God!page 5

What happened (Details of previous meetings etc).....pages 6-7

CHE Conferencepages 8-9

Gay Switchboards Conferencepage 9

Women in Nottinghampage 10

To J.T.page 10

Classified Advertisementspage 11

Nalgaypage 12

Police Harassmentpage 13

Discussion Grouppages 14/15

The Gay Scene, for better or for worsepage 16

God and Youpage 16

Odds and endspage 17

PROGRAMME

DERBY GROUP

MONDAY 5th JULY MEETING at MARIAN'S at 8 pm.

95, Arthur Street, DERBY. Later at the St. Helen's.

TUESDAY 6th JULY BUSINESS MEETING in the side room of the GLOBE

The Globe is on Sacheverel St. near the Old Playhouse. 8 pm.

THURSDAY 8th JULY DISCUSSION 1. The first of six (see page 14).

All these meetings are at Carole and Heather's,
278, Station Road, Mickleover, DERBY.

WEDNESDAY 14th JULY COFFEE at CHRIS' from 8 pm.

12, Wild St. DERBY. Afterwards at the GARRICK.

THURSDAY 15th JULY DISCUSSION 2. Carole and Heathers at 8 pm.

MONDAY 19th JULY COFFEE etc. at Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

Afterwards at the Great Northern.

THURSDAY 22nd JULY DISCUSSION 3. Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

FRIDAY 23rd JULY BOTTLE PARTY at MARIAN'S from 8 pm.

The address is 95, Arthur St. Derby.

WEDNESDAY 28th JULY MEETING at PHIL'S at 8pm.

The address is 29, Severn St. Alvaston, Derby.

THURSDAY 29th JULY DISCUSSION 4. Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

SATURDAY 31st JULY JOINT BIRTHDAY PARTY for FIONA AND PHIL.

At 29, Severn St. Derby. All presents gratefully received,
especially if they come in bottles or large cans.

MONDAY 2nd AUGUST COFFEE etc at Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

TUESDAY 3rd AUGUST BUSINESS MEETING at the GLOBE at 8 pm.

THURSDAY 5th AUGUST DISCUSSION 5. at Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

WEDNESDAY 11th AUGUST COFFEE at CHRIS' (see above) at 8 pm.

THURSDAY 12th AUGUST DISCUSSION 6. Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

MONDAY 16th AUGUST COFFEE etc at Carole and Heather's at 8 pm.

WEDNESDAY 18th AUGUST COFFEE at BERYL'S at 8 pm.

You'll need a car to get there, but lifts can be arranged. Ring
people under CONTACTS (page 4) for details of how to get there.

SATURDAY 21st AUGUST BOTTLE PARTY at CHRIS' - its his
birthday this time.

12, Wild St. Derby.

WEDNESDAY 25th AUGUST MEETING at PHIL'S (See above) at 8 pm.

MONDAY 30th AUGUST MEETING at MARIAN'S (See above) at 8 pm.

Come to see her Italian sun tan.

PROGRAMME (Continued)

MANSFIELD GROUP

EVERY MONDAY at the WHITE SWAN, from 8 pm.

The White Swan is in the Idlewells Precinct, Sutton in Ashfield.
For advance notice of a future disco see page 6.

NOTTINGHAM GROUP

WEDNESDAY 7th JULY LA CHIC from 9 pm.

NB. All our La Chic meetings start in the upstairs 'Cocktail Lounge'. You get to it by going up the stairs on the right as soon as you enter La Chic - remember, entrance is free on Wednesdays.

TUESDAY 13th JULY TEN PIN BOWLING

But so that we can all meet together before going to the bowling alley, we are going to start in the Trip to Jerusalem at 8 pm. Be on time or we will have gone without you. The Trip is opposite the People's College just beside the Castle.

WEDNESDAY 21st JULY LA CHIC from 9 pm. 5/13 Canal St.

We hope to spend part of this meeting discussing the sort of questions that have been fired at those of us who have been to speak to other groups by way of campaigning.

TUESDAY 27th JULY COFFEE at TONY'S from 8.30 pm.

The address is Flat 4, Pelham Mews, 19A, Pelham Crescent, The Park. If you want something else to drink - bring a bottle.

WEDNESDAY 4th AUGUST LA CHIC from 9 pm (see above)

This is perhaps the best night to have a look at our future programme for September and October. Have you any ideas?

FRIDAY 13th AUGUST COFFEE AND THINGS at IAN and DAVID'S 8.30 pm

The address is 64, Fabis Drive, Clifton Grove, Nottingham. Some of us will be going to a club, (or watching horror films) after.

WEDNESDAY 18th AUGUST LA CHIC from 9 pm (see above)

FRIDAY 20th AUGUST RADIO AND TV BROADCASTER RAY GOSLING will be talking to the group. 8 pm.

The meeting will be at the CVS, 31A, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. (next door to the People's Centre). Remember that you have to BUZZ the dinger to get in!

WEDNESDAY 1st SEPTEMBER LA CHIC from 9 pm. (see above)

THURSDAY 9th SEPTEMBER COFFEE ETC at MIKE'S from 8.30 pm.

The address is 19, Thomas Close, St. Anns, Nottingham.

 CONTACTS

Contacts for the three groups are as follows:-

MANSFIELD

Hilary Stafford and Pat McLernon,
3, Belmont Road, Kirkby in Ashfield, NOTTS.

Tel. Mansfield 755000

DERBY

Joint Convenor: Heather Cook, 278, Station Road, Mickleover, Derby.

Tel. Derby 511651

Joint Convenor: Philip Hickson, 29, Severn St., Alvaston, Derby.

Tel. Derby 752260

Treasurer: Fiona Gillespie, 59, Heath Road, Ripley, Derbyshire.

Tel. Ripley 45579

Press Officer: Roland Willden.

NOTTINGHAM

Joint Convenor: Richard Webster, 13, Balmoral Road, Nottingham.

Tel. Nottingham 74870

Joint Convenor: Tony Barker, Flat 4, Pelham Mews,
19A, Pelham Crescent, The Park, Nottingham.

Tel. Nottingham 49137

Treasurer/Membership secretary: David Edgley, 64, Fabis Drive,
Clifton Grove, Nottingham.

Tel. Nottingham 216447

The publishable address for Nottingham Group is:-

Nottingham CHE, c/o 31A, Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

Please remember that if you are renewing your subscription, or
subscribing for the first time, CHE has a new National Address:-

CHE PO. BOX 427, 33 King Street, Manchester.

(But better still, send your sub. directly to your LOCAL
treasurer - this saves time, postage, envelopes and blood
pressure)

OH MY GOD



"Yes?"



"I didn't like it!"



 WHAT HAPPENED

MANSFIELD

The May Frolicks disco/buffet was a social and financial success thanks to the support of CHE groups and gay people from Chesterfield, Derby, Doncaster, Leicester, Mansfield, Manchester Nottingham, Rotherham and Sheffield. About 80 people in all. To those who helped with transport, preparing food and providing music, we extend our thanks. Not forgetting Sylvia and the staff of the White Swan for providing the bar.

The jungle drums have been beating far and wide about our Monday night socials at the White Swan and the pub has gained custom on Mondays and on other nights of the week as a result. The group and other local gay people have been invited to two Saturday night parties which have been most enjoyable. We are planning another disco for September 11th - details have to be finalised and full information will appear in the next newsletter.

As the newest group with the least members, we would welcome more positive support from people in Nottingham and Derby - it would help considerably as well as adding to the fun.

Hilary.

DERBY

At a special meeting of the group on Wednesday 16th of June, various officials were elected. Heather and Philip became joint convenors, Fiona was appointed Treasurer and Roland became Press Officer. (For full details see CONTACTS).

All Officers hold office for one year from the date of election unless they choose to leave before then. It was also decided to hold monthly business meetings on the first Tuesday of every month in a place not used for any of our social gatherings.

As Derek will be leaving us within the next two months, he was unable to become a formal 'official', but will be ready to drop his pearls of wisdom if required.

Plans are well in hand for a big publicity drive and we have been invited to do a phone in on Radio Derby on July 14th. Anyone able to listen at the not so prime time of 9 am is encouraged to phone in.

Heather.

NOTTINGHAM

Although we didn't seem to be immensely busy during the past couple of months, now I look back I'm surprised by how much has actually happened.

We have now become fully associated with the Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service and have gained representation on the 'Personal Problems in the Community' committee. A few days ago Ian spoke to 30 GPs at the City Hospital and started a discussion that went on much longer than was intended. The meeting's organiser confirmed that the response was both interested and essentially favourable.

 WHAT HAPPENED (Continued)

There have been further developments in connection with the Forum on homosexuality planned for the late Autumn. The speakers are still to be finalised, but we have had confirmation that Graham Knight of Radio Trent and TV broadcaster Ray Gosling are willing to chair some of the sessions.

We haven't been particularly adventurous in our recent meetings, but on the other hand we haven't yet had any flops. The meeting at the CVS where we heard from a member of Brighton Gay switchboard was interesting, made a profit and was (would you believe?) well attended. It will be remembered for bringing to our notice the genuine case of the Irish Gay Switchboard which didn't have a phone. We are incredibly lucky to have such a convenient, free and comfortable venue as the upstairs of La Chic for the regular fortnightly social/discussion evenings which are to be continued. We have made arrangements with the Derby Group to prevent the clash which took place in the last programme over the fortnightly meetings that they held on Wednesdays. We now alternate - and hope that this will encourage some two-way traffic.

PUBLICITY

The discussion on Publicity for the Nottingham Group, which was held at the CVS on May 21st led to another attempt to place an ad. in the Nottingham Evening Post's Personal Column. Undaunted by four years of refusals we ventured to suggest a sequence of consecutive Wednesdays for these advertisements. Tony amazed everyone, including himself, by getting an acceptance. (T. Bailey Forman, however, will not accept the word "Gay" - only homosexual - neither will they allow "Meetings" or "Social")

Ian and Ian volunteered to tackle Radios Trent and Nottingham (respectively) in order to get them to run details of the groups contact address and of La Chic. Both Radios agreed in principle, though as yet none of us have heard anything.

I am hoping that the entry that I sent to the annual Nottingham Evening Post Citizen's Guide will be accepted for the third year, but we will not know this until July. The Beeston Library/Citizen's Advice Bureau have agreed to my request for them to display a CHE poster.

Howard has seen that we are represented 2½ times in the Nottingham Voice; under Meetings, Gay Advice and under the general People's Centre heading. Finally, I couldn't resist blowing 75p on an ad. in the Hyson Green Guardian where we will rub shoulders with "Trainee masseur seeks fat lady for practice. "

David.

MAMMARY MIA! (II)

I learned from the 2nd form examinations that "Australia is famous for the Koala Bra."

Ian's secretary thinks that Harvey's Bristol Cream is a bust developer.

CHE CONFERENCE: SOUTHAMPTON

Entering Southampton Guildhall on the opening night of the Conference, we were met by a band of leafletting Christians who explained that they were presenting us with the Truth so that we could repent and be freed from our slavery. The protesters, from The Congregational Church, were ignored by most of the delegates, though one heckler, a gay teacher from London, became so abusive that his name was taken by an onlooking policeman.

After a lavish reception a 'mixed' disco was held in the main hall. The Women's disco arranged for that evening was abandoned in favour of the nine of us having a women's 'drink-up'.

The opening speaker was Brian Gould, Labour MP for Southampton Test. He received a standing ovation for his speech in support of CHE in which he told us that the aim of CHE must be to reach a situation where homosexuality and criminality were not automatically linked in the public mind. He warned that most of his colleagues were afraid of being labelled by supporting gay rights. "They are not bigots," he said "but they are afraid of going too far ahead of public opinion." He continued by saying that too many minorities were suffering as a consequence of the myth of a standard 'majority'. Society, he said, was a series of interacting minorities.

Alan Clarke, CHE's general secretary until he was sacked two months ago, asked conference to back him in his fight for re-instatement, but delegates did not support him and he will now take the case to industrial tribunal. He expects £5,500 damages.

An issue which seemed to cause a great deal of concern was the question of whether E.C. meetings should be open to observers from the membership. This motion was proposed on the grounds that it is too easy at present for the EC. to project the exact image of themselves that they require by specific instructions to the minute-taker who is a paid employee of the EC. A great deal of valuable time was wasted in debating this issue amid a welter of personal attacks and abuse. The motion was not carried.

Another issue which caused high feeling was an emergency motion condemning the EC. decision to invite the gay American soldier Leonard Matlovitch. The proposer of the motion said that he would not fight for the right of gay people to oppress others. The motion was heavily defeated.

Matlovitch in his address said that he had volunteered to fight in Vietnam. "They gave me a medal for killing 2 men and a dishonourable discharge for loving one." Throughout his speech he was heckled by the pacifist contingent. Regrettably his message was obscured by 'emotion' and at one point it seemed as if he would be unable to continue, but by that time many of the delegates had left anyway.

A motion proposing that CHE members should have the choice of giving part of their membership fee to the Women's Campaign Collective was proposed by Heather (Joint convenor of the Derby Group). The motion was agreed by a large majority amid loud applause.

 CHE CONFERENCE (Continued)

The last plenary session was taken up with criticism of the amount of time spent discussing the internal organisation of CHE as compared with that devoted to gay rights issues. The EC were instructed to establish the main topics for the 1977 Conference well in advance and to devise a means of prioritizing motions submitted by local groups so that only those of real concern to the whole membership are given conference time. It was proposed that discussion documents on the main topics be prepared and circulated in time to allow local group discussion.

There was criticism too of the prohibitive cost, place and timing of the Conference. Glenys Parry, Chairwoman, observed that the reason why the conference had been so docile was simply because most of the radical people couldn't afford to attend. Only 35 women attended, exactly half last years total.

One concluding speaker said that the Conference was rather like the film 'Jaws'. Everybody was nauseated by it but wanted to see it again.

Marion.

 THE GAY SWITCHBOARDS CONFERENCE: June 1976

The conference was held in Manchester and Switchboards from London, Brighton, Glasgow, Bristol, West Midlands, Manchester and Nottingham were represented.

Each Switchboard gave an individual report and I informed the meeting about the service at the People's Centre. The importance of the autonomy of switchboards was emphasised. It was generally felt that support from outside organisations was a good thing, but it was important that an outside organisation did not have control over a switchboard.

The switchboards were concerned about transvestite and transsexual enquiries and spent some time deciding how such enquiries could be best served. Information on TV/TS organisations was exchanged. The compiling and publicising of a regular, reliable gay guide was discussed, as was the role of switchboards and whether they were just information services or whether they should undertake befriending (switchboards give out information about befriending services) and fighting for gay rights. I was asked if Nottingham would be having a full gay switchboard and I explained that we are CHE dominated and other Nottingham organisations are not interested in taking part in the operation of the service, but hopefully we could have a switchboard one day. A Switchboard charter was drawn up thus:-

- 1) To relieve isolation of gay people and other sexual minority groups by providing information of social and political amenities and where possible, legal, medical and psychiatric help. This to be done by phone and where necessary personal contact.
- 2) Information given out must be unbiased (politically or otherwise).
- 3) All information must be regularly checked and verified.
- 4) Operators must not use Switchboards to procure sexual contacts for themselves or any other person.
- 5) Switchboards must not be affiliated to organisations which would infringe their autonomy.

Howard.

 WOMEN IN NOTTINGHAM

WOMEN'S BAR

Every Tuesday evening the lounge bar of the White Horse Inn, Ilkeston Road, Nottingham is open as a women's bar. The idea is that there should be at least one place in Nottingham where women can meet one another and have a drink free from outside pressures. It is going very well indeed with new people coming down every week. From 8 pm.

WOMEN'S DISCOS

It was disappointing to have to cancel the June 19th disco at the Yorker, but the magistrates refused the extension this time. The general consensus was that the event should be held over until an extension was forthcoming. The problem is that Bill and Mary at the Yorker have decided not to book events that go on after 10.30 pm. All this is not as sinister as it sounds. Mary has been in poor health and she is trying to cut down on working late - and the magistrates just had an ungenerous day. So we have to find a new venue for the Women's discos. Has anyone any suggestions? The landlord of the White Horse Inn is being approached, but ideally a place in the city centre would be preferable, simply in terms of accessibility. The next disco will be held as soon as possible so look out for the information. If anyone can help us with new ideas for a new venue, please ring Nottingham 700689 : Hilary and Penny.

SOLICITOR

If anyone needs legal advice, Penny and Hilary can recommend a city solicitor - a woman with special interest in women's legal problems generally and especially helpful to gay women. Ring us for details.

Penny.

 TO J.T.

Denials flying through the air.
 Would your public really care?
 "Smear campaign" your spokesman notes.
 Would it cost you any votes?
 In this day of flights to space
 Must admitting mean disgrace?

Liberal views pervade the sky.
 Do we differ, you and I?
 You, within the public gaze,
 I amidst suburban haze.
 Are our callings side by side,
 Or have you really nought to hide?

Anon (from Derby?)

 CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

PERSONAL

Friday. Vegetable stall - Macfisheries.
 You smiled; we touched; your eyes returned my glance.
 You handed me three pounds of radisherries -
 Write BOX 16 for repeat performance.

"TV. 12 inch!" proclaimed the ad.
 (And even in a dress, that's not too bad.)
 I wrote - but suffered disillusion.
 They sent a set from Rediffusion.

IN MEMORIAM

He passed away in Aldergrove;
 His feet were big, his name was Roddy.
 My memory preserved his love;
 Formaldehyde preserved his body.

An etched brass R.I.P. was bought,
 (The plaque now hangs in Clifton Vestry)
 It helps to keep him in my thought -
 I keep his teeth to crimp my pastry.

I found his fingers on the floor
 Beneath the kitchen window-sill.
 He'd caught dry-rot! (And what is more,
 It failed to yield to Rentokil.)

Prolonging thus our great affair,
 I'd tried in vain to cheat Death's Sting
 And soon succumbed to tired despair,
 For necrophilia's dead boring.

FOR SALE

LEOPARDS: Quite a few still left. Drink only diesel oil.
 Nice mauvish colour. (Also, 500 cans of whitewash)
 Apply: F.Higgins, County Hall.

David.

 THE UPPER CLASS DICTIONARY

CRÊCHE: What happened when you hit that bollard on the A50.

RAINED: Something you cut off bacon.

 NALGAY

Nalgay, the NALGO Gay Group was set up in 1974 with the following aims:-

- 1) To seek out cases of discrimination in the work situation and to fight them. To try to get employers to a comprehension of the oppression that faces those who are not heterosexual. To attempt to break through the Union on the issue of gay rights and the position of Transvestites and transsexuals.
- 2) To educate fellow workers to a more realistic understanding of sexuality.
- 3) To be a support group for homosexual, bisexual, transvestite and transsexual people in NALGO. To act as a referral agency to various gay, TV/TS, counselling, befriending, activist and social bodies.
- 4) To work with other trade union gay groups, gay professional organisations and other gay groups towards our mutual liberation. To work with other groups campaigning through the TUC for a sexual orientation clause to be inserted in their model clause for agreements.
- 5) To try to achieve mutual support with the women's movement in our battle against sexism.

The group began as a result of a workshop at a CHE activists Conference. A letter then appeared in Gay News and in Public Service, the Official NALGO newspaper. The letter in P.S. produced many replies - some offering support and some showing ignorance, prejudice and abuse. Despite reactionary and homophobic attitudes and attempts to put down the group by certain factions in NALGO, we have received encouraging statements from NALGO assuring us of its opposition to discrimination against gays and its support for anyone so discriminated against.

An Ad. for the group has appeared in Public Service and the group received mention when P.S. reported on the NCCL questionnaire and its recommendations to employing authorities in accordance with NALGO policy. The group has its own publication NALGAY NEWS and is affiliated to the NCCL. We are represented on the CHE Employment sub-committee. The Group has received publicity in Gay News, PS, Municipal Journal, Radio Nottingham, Nottingham Evening Post, Nottingham Voice and branch magazines. We have a motion for the NALGO Conference this year and a number of us will be at Eastbourne Lobbying and leafletting. We have a number of supporters amongst the conference delegates.

The group now has a constitution which takes effect from next year. In the meantime we are run by a Steering Committee and Regional branches are being set up.

We are participating in the Gay Labour Group Trade Union Gay Group clearing system. This means that enquirers will be put in touch with their appropriate trade union gay group. Where there isn't one, and there are a number of people willing to form one, help will be given. NALGAY has had requests to speak to other groups and if you want a speaker contact the Secretary, who can also arrange speakers to talk about the CHE Employment Campaign.

 NALGAY (Continued)

For too long decent citizens and workers in this country have been abused, oppressed or ignored because of their sexual orientation. It is only by joining our local and national gay groups and gay caucuses in our unions that we will achieve anything. We have a fundamental human right to be treated as first class citizens and we must rebel collectively against the abominable situation we so often find ourselves in. I feel that gays, TVs, TSS women and enlightened heterosexuals need to work much harder together to free ourselves from the bonds of sexism.

Howard Hyman, Secretary - Nalgay Steering Committee.
Flat 2, 108, Foxhall Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham. Nottingham 600266

 POLICE HARASSMENT

Recently we have learned of what seems absolutely gratuitous police activity involving at least one public convenience in Nottingham.

In the middle of June two men were arrested in the toilet at the bottom of Carlton Hill, opposite the Duke of Devonshire. The two were alone in the building, which is old fashioned and unroofed, at the time and the police had evidently made use of stepladders or periscopes to enable them to see over the walls. The two men were told " we caught two last night, we've caught you tonight and we'll catch some more tomorrow and the night after that."

No reference was made to complaints by the public, but the case seems to have the usual classic features: advice by the police to plead guilty, promises that there would be no publicity if a guilty plea were entered (a promise which it cannot be repeated too often is meaningless, since the police have no control whatsoever over the press and have indeed been known themselves to inform employers), even a totally untrue statement to one of the two men that the other had already admitted the purported offence.

But however much we may dislike the police methods however strongly we may feel that such 'snooping' is a waste of police time and public money and that it is a barbaric harassment of people who are doing no harm and may be acting from a very real need, we must never forget that any kind of sexual activity in public lavatories is against the law and that even an innocent glance may result in a charge of soliciting. It is not a subject on which anyone should talk hypocritical cant, but it is one nobody should be tempted to treat too lightly. In this case two people were each fined £50, but one of them is in real danger of losing his career.

Richard.

We are compiling a list of sympathetic solicitors and though professional etiquette forbids us to publish their names and addresses, you can find out about them by phoning any of the Nottingham contacts.

 DISCUSSION GROUP

Well I thought it was important (or rather I wanted to) do something more than just sit around and chat - good though that is. So for the benefit of like minded souls here is an article I ripped off from the Manchester Women's Group. The topics they list were intended just for women, but I don't see why a mixed group shouldn't use them and anyway they're not rigid. The dates of the six meetings are in the Programme.

Carole.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING

All gay people have to talk about being gay, because we have all been brought up as heterosexual and have internalised many misconceptions about homosexuality. Many people say they're not worried about being gay (it isn't fashionable to be worried about it) but unless we've completely come out - and sometimes even after coming out - we still retain feelings of inferiority and guilt. Apart from this, there is a great deal to learn about homosexuality and ourselves as gay: about the gay movement, our own group, about why gay people are oppressed, about ourselves, our fears and worries, how we relate to other people and they to us.

For the past year the Manchester Gay Women's group has had within it a series of small groups of six to nine women, who meet once a week for about 6 to 8 weeks, to talk about all these things and lots more. Each group has had in it women who have been in the group for a very short time and for a very long time, and somewhere in between. The point of having small groups is to give people positive support in coming to terms with being gay, talking about things that bother them instead of pretending they don't exist. We've found that many women who belong to MGWG come out to parents, husbands, children, friends at work, so this support is needed. It also means that groups of people can get to know each other really well (and quite a few women have been in more than one group.)

Some of the things that women in the first small group said about it were:-

INGRID: I like the small group and now I feel more free to express my feelings. I've found out a lot about the things we've been talking about and also a lot about the other people in the group. When I first came to it I felt very puzzled about everything, but now I know where I stand and how I feel. Sometimes I feel very shy of speaking because my words come out all wrong and sometimes I feel silly because I'm frightened that I might show myself up with what I say when it's personal.

JOY: The small group has given me the chance to voice opinions I would otherwise have kept to myself. In discussing problems in general and my own in particular I have been able to look at situations in a much more rational way than in the past. I now find I have the confidence to discuss things I know little about without fear of making a fool of myself.

STEPHANIE: In a smaller group people can talk on a more personal level without feeling embarrassed. After being in a small group for a few weeks I found that the larger group meetings were less daunting and I feel that I can now contribute much more to the main group.

 THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING (Continued)

Below is a list of the things we talk about; it isn't kept to rigidly:-

WEEK 1: a) What the small group is for.

b) Who we all are; what sort of jobs we do etc.

c) What we expected before meeting other gay people and before coming to the Gay Women's group; and have our ideas changed?

d) What do we expect to get out of both the main group and the small group?

WEEK 2: a) When and how did we first realise we were gay? How did we think about it? Have our ideas changed since then?

b) How did things like the media, religion, medical professions etc affect the way that we thought of ourselves as being gay?

c) Is homosexuality natural?

d) Has hiding our sexuality (and a large part of our personality) affected our relationships with people (eg parents).

WEEK 3: a) How do we really feel about men? about gay men?

b) How do we feel about married gay women?

c) And about married gay women with children?

d) Bisexuality: what is it? do we understand it? how do we feel about it (eg. in relation to monogamy?)

WEEK 4a) Sexual politics - what does it mean and how does it affect us?

b) Relationships - are the old models best or is it time we looked for new ones?

c) Role-playing - what is it? do we have to do it? what are the alternatives?

d) Sex with women - when you've never done it before it can be worrying; even if you have, you may still want to talk about it. Straight society has lowered sex to the level of sniggering and dirty jokes: has that happened to us? need it happen? Why it happens.

WEEK 5: a) Coming out: what it means, have any of us come out?

what were the reactions? Why is it a good/bad thing to do? How can we help each other?

b) Telling parents is often the hardest part. Has anyone told their parents? How did they react? Is it always a good thing to do?

c) How does coming out affect us at work, school, college, church etc?

d) Coming out to husbands if we're married; the particular problems.

WEEK 6: a) The gay movement - what it is like to us; Che and what it is trying to do; the rest of CHE and what it's like, how it might differ from our own group and why.

b) The women's movement; what it's all about, how it relates to us; the connections between the two movements.

c) The need for a gay community (as opposed to ghetto) if only because we all grow old and we'll need it especially then.

d) What we can do to develop a gay community as individuals as part of a gay group

 THE GAY SCENE - FOR BETTER, OR FOR WORSE?

Let us take a look at the present gay-scene. Is it productive? Yes, but in what way? For many, it is just part of a weekly routine - a sort of sophisticated ghetto for escapists. I say escapists because many of these people are terrified of the outside world which casts forth upon them its taboos and prejudices. But one may wonder how can these people, many of whom are forced into the 'gay ghetto', not wake up, pull themselves together and unite in their oppression. That is what CHE is there for.

I believe that until homosexuals have achieved equal status with their heterosexual counterparts, they should unite to win liberation. The gay-scene should be used as a secure beach-head from which to invade the territories of prejudice on all fronts. One does not win a war by arguing amongst oneself thus creating rifts through which the enemies can seep. Long may the bigots laugh at us in our disarray. Why should they? Let us use what little freedom we have as a foundation upon which to build a secure future. Let us use the gay-scene, not as a 'whispering gallery', beauty contest or butcher's shop - let us use it as a stepping stone to better things. So how about cutting out all the internal unpleasantness and bitchyness of the gay-scene and settle down to some hard work. Let's do all we can for better, not for worse. Most of us will have heard of 'divide and rule' - as long as we are divided, the heterosexual bigot will rule our lives.

Anthony

 GOD AND YOU

I believe that God has created us in his own image. In trying to understand what this means, I remember that the Hebrews use names to describe a person's character, and that the name of God means "I am who I am."

Recognising the image of God in myself, therefore, is to recognise not only that God has made me as I am, but that he has given me the right to be as I am. I am what I am, because I am.

This, then, is my answer to those who, claiming to know God, deny him by their belief that my homosexuality is sinful, and commit the sin against the Spirit that will not be forgiven.

Charles.

 DEADLINE

The last date for inclusion of material in the next CHIMAERA is FRIDAY AUGUST 27th. If you have cartoons or illustrations they must be in by FRIDAY AUGUST 20th - or earlier if possible. Give contributions to David (for Nottingham), Heather (for Derby) and Hilary (for Mansfield)

ODDS AND ENDS

Bruce has asked me to award the Order of the Duck-Billed Platitute to "Ray Batchelor", author of GN's unspeakable gallimaufry of plagiarism "The Return of Supergay" - which, we are to be assured, has nothing, repeat NOTHING to do with the Bard of Herbert Road. (I hope that was nasty enough, or he may want his £5 back)

I hear that Frederick March's second son has just married Tuesday Weld - which makes her Tuesday March the Second.

Hartley's of Ruddington have absolutely no connection with CHE or the gay scene - but they did fit me with a new electrical immersion heater first thing on Saturday morning after I'd phoned at 6 pm on Friday. (Anyway, we need a bit of tone in this mag. after all the frivolities I've been typing for the last 16 pages) Circuit-to-us, Hartley Baby.

On glancing through the last Gay News Gay Guide I noticed that their printer had decided that Nottingham CHE "Meets Weely." Send him back to the Guardian! (Or could this be a consequence of having the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham?)

I was amused to find reference in my Readers Digest Gardening Book to "Pansy Sickness". Symptoms:- wilting, accompanied by rotting crowns. Bad cases must be burned, but usually it can be remedied by a change of position.

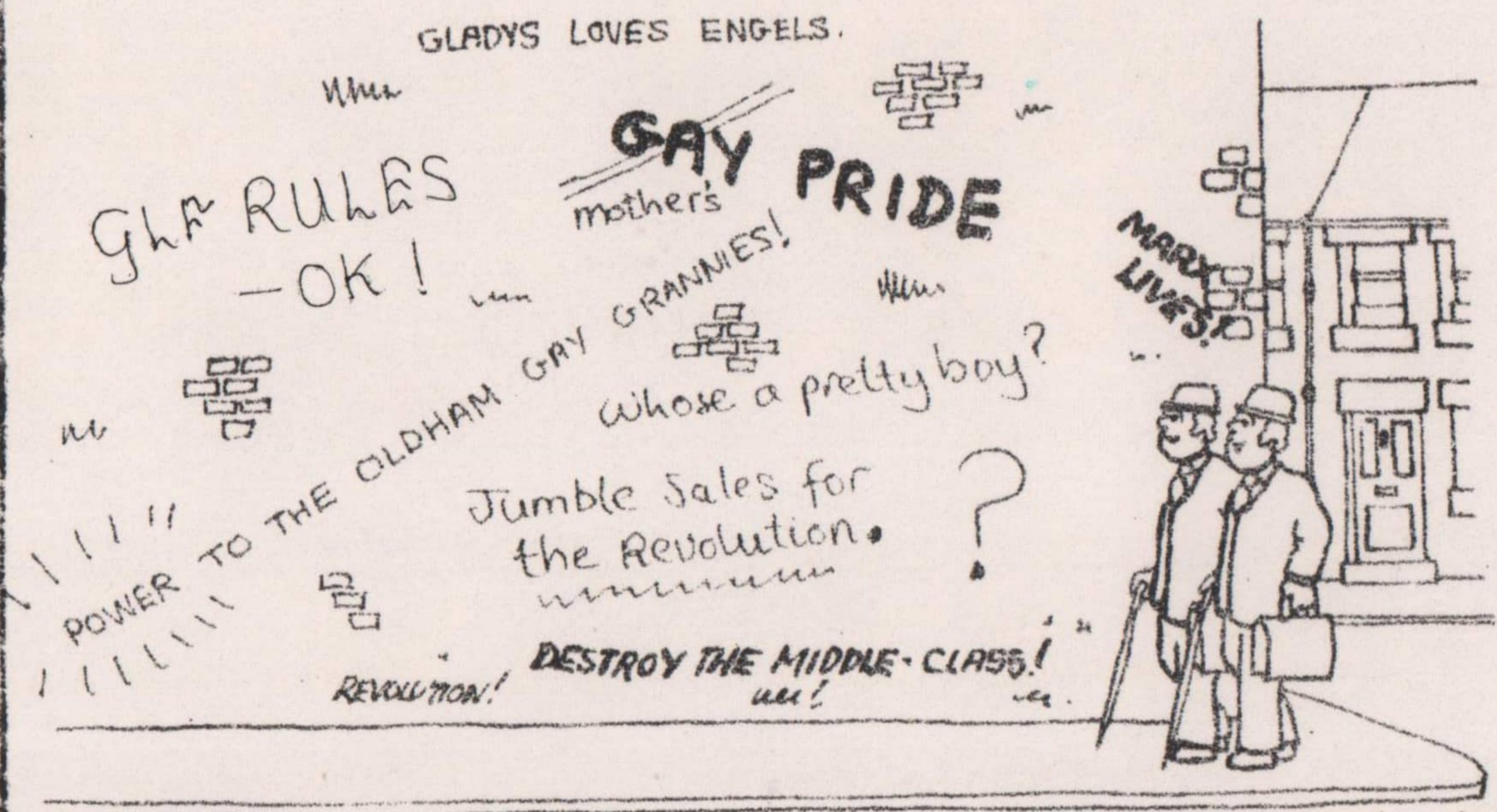
On the subject of positions, my friend Dilys Mendel tells me that when she crossed the Kamasutra with the National Westminster Bank, she got 26 new positions - all of them closed.

by Imperial Electric

GRAFFITI

I
CHOKED
LINDA
LOVELACE

SPOONERISE
FRIAR
TUCK



Ker Pyne

"Do you realise that it's ten years to the day since we wrote all that?"