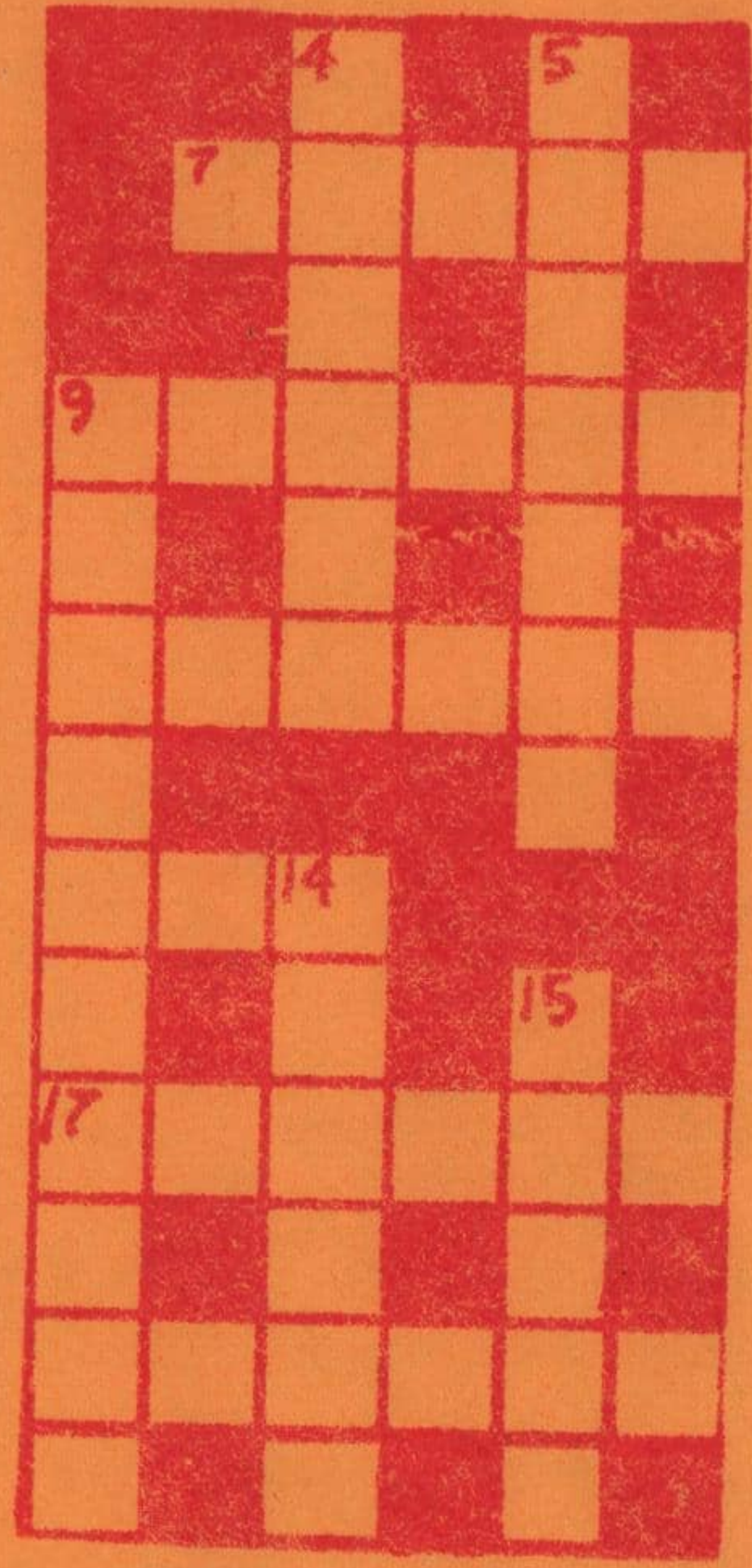
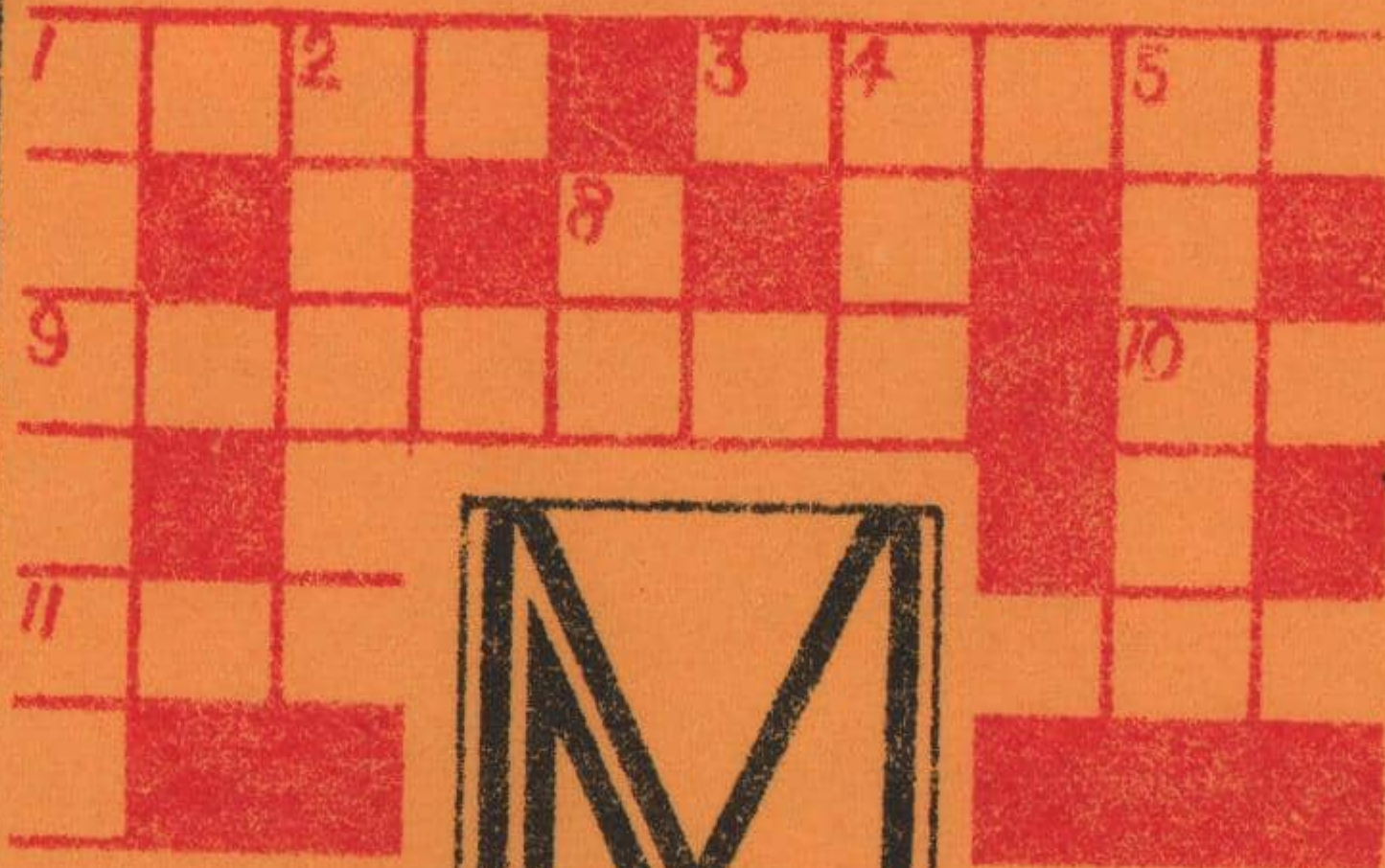


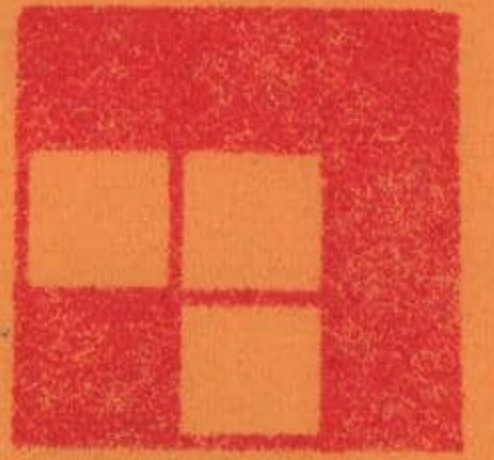
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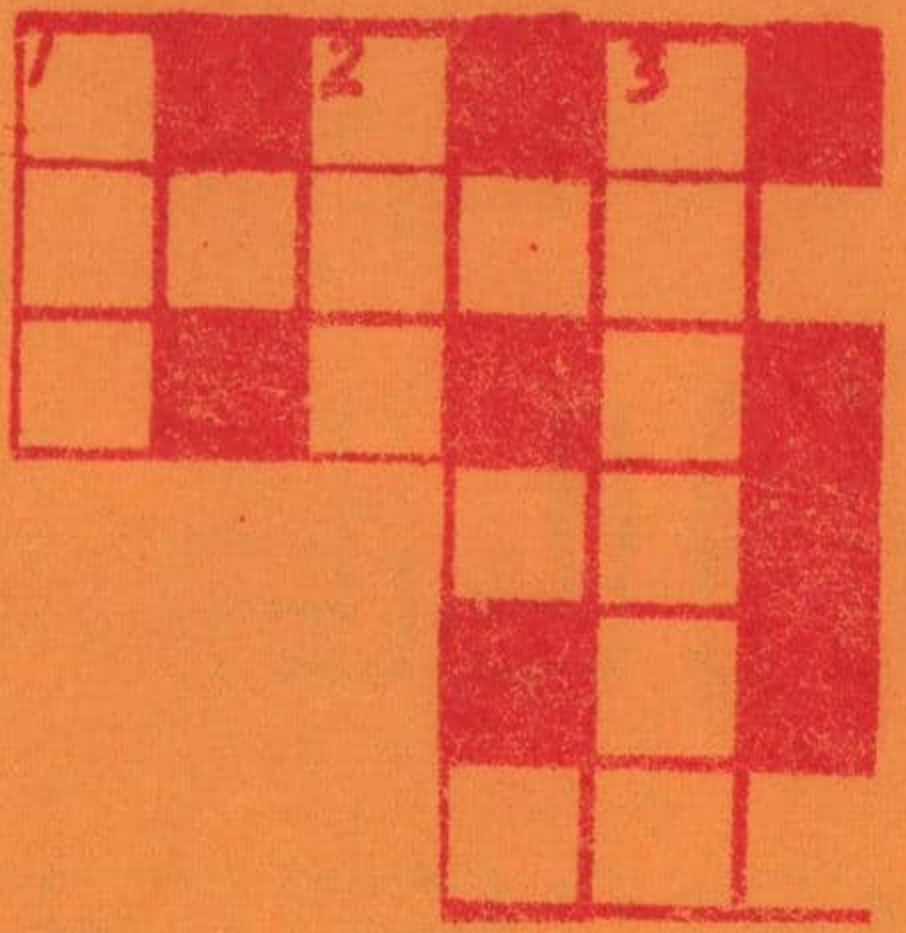
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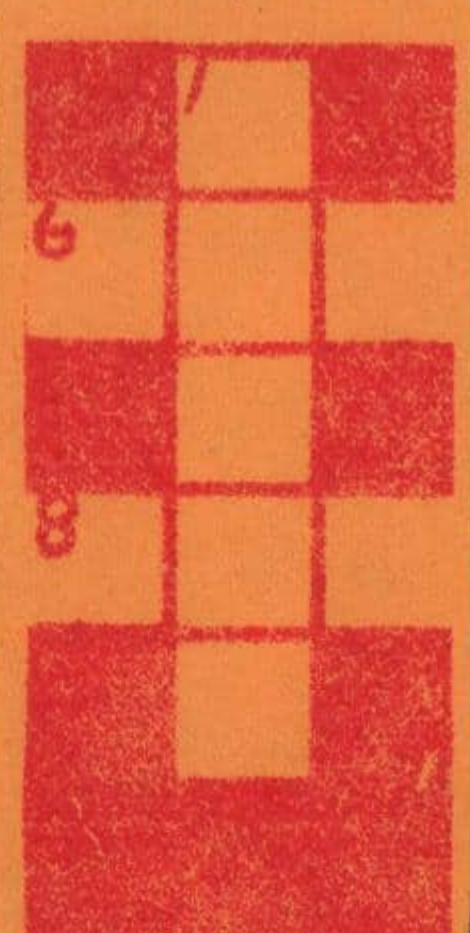
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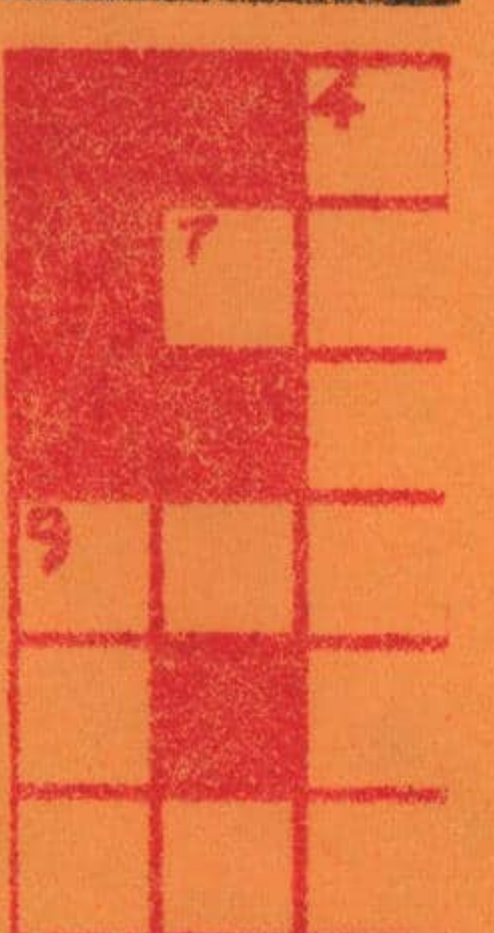
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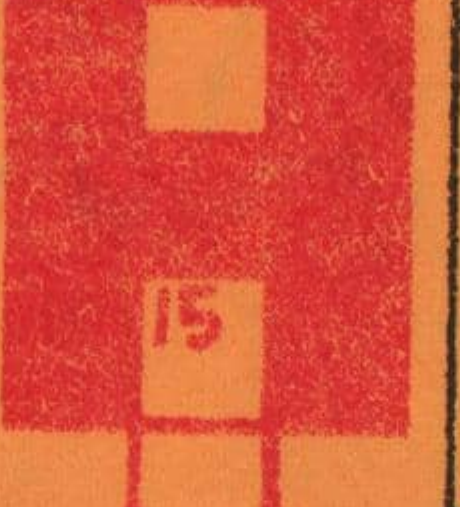
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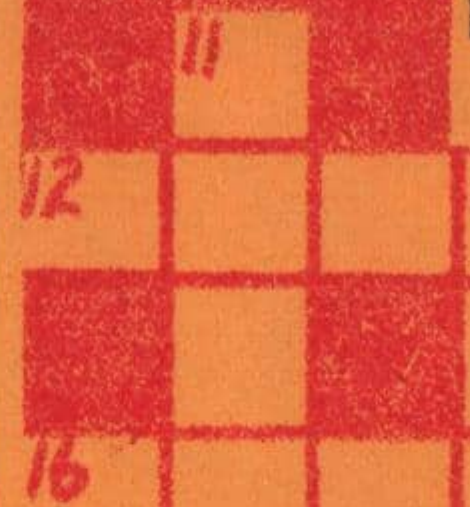
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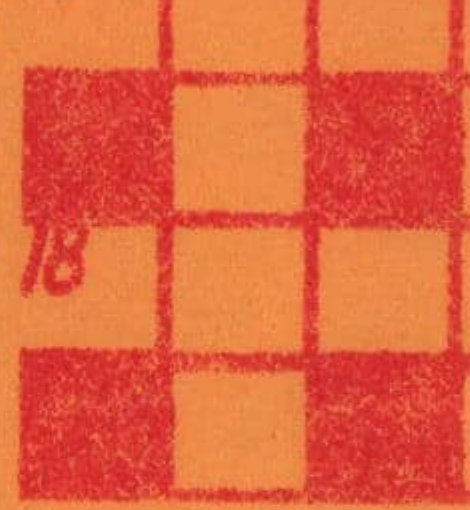
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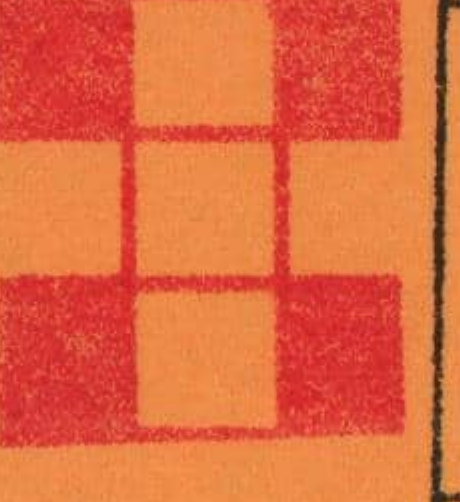
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NEWSLETTER FOR THE NOTTINGHAM, MANSFIELD AND DERBY CHE GROUPS

Apologies go in advance for the rather short and 'functional' newsletter. To a large extent this is intentional as we are intending to bring out a bumper issue in time for the CHE Annual Conference. This will mean, however, that the next newsletter will have to be assembled a little earlier than usual.

A more important situation brings us round to the ever present topic of cash and National CHE. The national administration of CHE has always been run on a shoestring and has often been carried over difficult periods by various donations. These donations have practically dried up, but for a very good reason - if you look under the contributions to Gay News' Fighting Fund you will see that the majority are coming from CHE groups, who are devoting much of their time to fund-raising on behalf of GN. This is affecting CHE itself to such an extent that National Office is having to make economies that can only hinder the efficient running of the organisation. Depending on your circumstances, you can help in three ways:-

By joining CHE if you are reading this and are NOT a member.
By paying a little more when you renew your subscription.
By sending along a donation - either directly to National Office or via your local group's treasurer.

David.

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PROGRAMME

DERBY

Anyone without transport who wants to come to any of our meetings can phone Derby 752260 any Friday from 8-11pm and we will do our best to arrange a lift for them. This is particularly important for the longer outings as we want to arrange to fill all available seats. Also we would like car owners who are going to meetings to ring if they can offer lifts. (Phil's and Chris' addresses are under CONTACTS).

SATURDAY JULY 2nd A new gay club has been opened in LEICESTER and they are having an evening for CHE groups tonight. Details from Philip.

WEDNESDAY JULY 6th COFFEE EVENING at CHRIS' & JEFF'S

FRIDAY JULY 8th PHONE EVENING. Derby 752260 (Chris/Jeff on phone)

WEDNESDAY JULY 13th PENNINE HOTEL BAR from 8.30 pm.

FRIDAY JULY 15th PHONE EVENING. (752260 Leigh/Philip on phone)

SUNDAY JULY 17th TRIP TO CASTLETON for a PICNIC.

Start at Markeaton Park carpark at 2 pm.

Visit dark, mysterious caves of Derbyshire when we get there!

FRIDAY JULY 22nd PHONE EVENING (752260 Allan/John on phone)

FRIDAY JULY 29th PHONE EVENING (752260 Martin/Edward on phone)

SATURDAY JULY 30th BIRTHDAY PARTY at PHILIP'S at 9 pm.
BRING A BOTTLE.

FRIDAY AUGUST 5th PHONE EVENING (752260 Chris/Jeff on phone)

MONDAY AUGUST 8th BUSINESS MEETING at CHRIS & JEFF'S 8pm.

FRIDAY AUGUST 12th PHONE EVENING (752260 Leigh/Philip on phone)

MONDAY AUGUST 15th TRIP TO THE "BLACK HORSE" at HULLAND WARD
Phone for details.

FRIDAY AUGUST 19th PHONE EVENING (752260 Allan/John on phone)

SATURDAY AUGUST 20th A TRIP to the NEW, IMPROVED PAVILION CLUB
at SHARDLOW.

Women members welcome to come along as they've installed a new loo! Starting from Philip's at 9.30 pm

FRIDAY AUGUST 26th PHONE EVENING (752260 Philip/Chris on phone)

FRIDAY/SATURDAY/SUNDAY/MONDAY 26th-29th August.

CHE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

at the COMMODORE in NOTTINGHAM. I HOPE THAT YOU'VE ALL BOOKED!

PROGRAMME

MANSFIELD

EVERY WEDNESDAY at the CHATSWORTH STEAK HOUSE, 125 Outram St.
Sutton in Ashfield. From 8 pm.

NOTTINGHAM

WEDNESDAY JULY 6th SHADES CLUB. But we are going to meet
before going along at the Hearty Goodfellow
at 9 pm.

THURSDAY JULY 14th A DISCUSSION at the CVS. at 8 pm.
You can read on page 5 about the sort of
speakers that we are hoping to get along to lead these discussions.
The address is 31a, Mansfield Road and remember to ring that
doorbell on the glass fronted door.

WEDNESDAY JULY 20th Some of us will be going out to visit the
MANSFIELD GROUP (See above)

THURSDAY JULY 28th A DISCUSSION at the CVS. 8pm (See above)

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 3rd SHADES CLUB - but meeting beforehand at
9 pm at the Hearty Goodfellow.

THURSDAY AUGUST 11th DISCUSSION at the CVS at 8 pm. (See above)
ALISON HENNIGAN of FRIEND and CHE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE will be leading the discussion.

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 17th PUB EVENING at the STRATHDON from 8.30pm
We will be using Samantha's Bar. You go in the main entrance
take the lift to the 1st floor and the bar is opposite the lift.

EVERY MONDAY As well as the regular GaySwitchboard Phone-In
Service, there will be Women's Meetings at the
CVS in the Lounge/Kitchen. These are very much in
an embryonic stage and if women from other groups
could help during the gestation period we would be
grateful.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER IS SATURDAY AUGUST 13th

This is about a week earlier than usual to allow us to get
everything together before the CHE Annual Conference.

 CONTACTS

MANSFIELD

Hilary and Pat. Mansfield 755000

BURTON ON TRENT

Charles. Burton on Trent 72587

Derek. Burton on Trent 212673

DERBY

Chris (Convenor) 14, Farningham Close, Spondon, Derby.

Philip. 29, Severn St., Alvaston, Derby. (Derby 752260)

NOTTINGHAM

Richard (Convenor) Nottingham 74870

David (Treasurer) Nottingham 216447

Tony (Social Organiser) Nottingham 49137

Howard (Political Activities) Nottingham 600266

Bob (Gay Switchboard Coordinator)

The publishable address for the Nottingham group is:-

Nottingham CHE, 31a, Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

The Gay Switchboard operates from the above address every
MONDAY and THURSDAY from 7-10pm. The phone number is

NOTTINGHAM 46881

Some of our members who go along to National CHE functions like the quarterly National Councils are being made to feel inferior by certain groups who have had their own flashy personal group badges made. If you are the sort of person who likes to put these wretched show-offs in their proper place then we have the answer. CHIMAERA Teeshirts! Roger has found a mail order firm who provide tee shirts (small, medium and large in about 8 colours) with your own choice of lettering across the front. The quality is quite good and they cost about £2 each. If you would like details then ask about them at any of the Nottingham meetings or phone Nottingham 216447.

P.S. You will find a pink sheet in this newsletter which gives you details of where to complain/congratulate if you see anything about gays. Keep the sheet and use it if you can.

FEEDBACK—how to complain or congratulate

When you see or hear anything on television or radio that features homosexuals or homosexuality which you feel is worthy of complaint or commendation do something about it *at the time*.

Telephone

Ring the radio or television station concerned and ask for the Duty Office. Tell the officer the nature of your complaint or congratulation clearly and reasonably—but firmly. (Some stations can't afford duty offices manned throughout all the broadcasting hours and you may be asked to ring again at another time).

Write

Follow up your call with a letter to the Chief Executive (or for the national networks as indicated below), outlining your comments and, if you're complaining, asking for a reply. Keep your letter as short and as reasonable as possible, being very clear about the time and details of the incident, and your own view of it.

National Networks

BBC Television 1 and 2 Managing Director, Television, Television Centre, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ
01-743 8000

BBC Radio 1, 2, 3 and 4 Managing Director, Radio, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA
01-580 4468

Independent Television News Editor and Chief Executive, ITN House, 48 Wells Street, London W1P 4DE
01-637 2424

Independent Radio News Editor-in-Chief, Communications House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London EC4P 4LP
01-353 1010

London

London Weekend Television (1900 Friday - Sunday)	01-261 3434
Thames Television (Monday - 1900 Friday)	01-387 9494
BBC Radio London	01-486 7611
	open line 01-486 7744
Capital Radio	01-388 1288
	open line 01-388 1255
London Broadcasting Company (LBC)	01-353 1010
	open line 01-353 8111

English Regions

BBC Radio and Television (National and Regional):

East:	Norwich (0603) 28841
Midlands:	Birmingham (021) 472 5353
North:	Leeds (0532) 41181
North-east:	Newcastle (0632) 20961
North-west:	Manchester (061) 236 8444
South:	Southampton (0703) 26201
South-west:	Plymouth (0752) 62283
West:	Bristol (0272) 32211

Independent Television

Anglia Television:	Norwich (0603) 28366
ATV:	Birmingham (021) 643 9898
Border Television:	Carlisle (0228) 25101
Channel Television:	Jersey (0534) 23451
Granada Television:	Manchester (061) 832 7211
HTV West:	Bristol (0272) 770271
Southern Television:	Southampton (0703) 28582
Tyne Tees Television:	Newcastle upon Tyne (0632) 610181
Westward Television:	Plymouth (0752) 69311
Yorkshire Television:	Leeds (0532) 38283

Scotland

All BBC Radio and Television:	Glasgow (041) 339 8844
Border Television:	Carlisle (0228) 25101
Grampian Television:	Aberdeen (0224) 53553
Scottish Television:	Glasgow (041) 332 9999

Wales

All BBC Radio and Television:	Cardiff (0222) 564888
HTV Wales:	Cardiff (0222) 21021

Northern Ireland

All BBC Radio and Television:	Belfast (0232) 44400
Ulster Television:	Belfast (0232) 28122

If you feel the reply you get from the station or network chief executive is unsatisfactory and you want to take your complaint further, write to the Director-General of the controlling authority:

BBC Television; BBC National, Regional and Local Radio:

British Broadcasting Corporation, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA

Independent Television and Independent Local Radio:

Independent Broadcasting Authority, 70 Brompton Road, London SW3 1EY

Advertising

To complain about television or radio advertising write to the Director-General of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, and to the manufacturers of the product concerned.

Local Radio Stations

Radio Nottingham: 47643

Radio Trent: 581731

 WHAT HAPPENED

NOTTINGHAM

Nottingham's members, and a good many more, are still probably suffering a little of the shock caused by the sudden closure of La Chic. It was the biggest gay club in Britain and although it had its critics (some justified and some not) all of us have had good times there and it will be missed. Its closure also knocked a hole out of our last programme. As many people enjoyed club evenings we have included a once-a-month meeting at Shades in the new programme.

Personally, I found our last run of events somewhat 'samey' and rather boring; the exception seems to have been the Monday and Thursday evenings at the CVS. I suspect that these could take over the function of the small-scale 'quiet' social function (such as coffee evenings) - we shall see. Certainly with those involved in doing helping/befriending work, with the people who call at CVS in response to our ads and with those in the group who come along just for a chat and some coffee, these are becoming much larger scale gatherings than we had originally anticipated. In the next programme you will notice two new ideas developing from this. The first is that we are starting more structured meetings every alternate Thursday by getting along a speaker to initiate a discussion. Over the next six weeks we are probably going to hear from someone from Leicester Gay Switchboard, a transvestite and from Alison Hennigan of Friend and CHE executive committee.

The second thing is that Nottingham's lack of women in and around CHE is at last being tackled. We are getting a reasonable number of enquiries from women and as Pat and Hilary have been regularly involved with the switchboard, these women have been able to talk to another woman and are now starting to come back. For the last fortnight we have had separate women's meetings in the lounge/kitchen of the CVS. At the moment only about 6 or 7 women are involved, but we hope that the numbers will grow and that this will provide a supportive meeting for those gay women who have contacted us at the CVS and may understandably be a little nervous.

Howard has begun the task of arranging meetings with our local MPs. So far William Whitlock, Jim Lester, Jack Dunnett and Kenneth Clarke have been met. You can read about this later in the newsletter along with Howard's investigation of the local Anti-Fascist committee. Hilary, Pat, Ian and David spent 2 hours talking to members of 'Off the Record' - the group set up to deal with the problems encountered by young people. The discussion centred around the sort of situations CHE and the Gay Switchboard had to deal with and whether there could be any overlap between 'Them' and 'us'. Tony and Howard have had letters in the Evening Post dealing with the closure of La Chic and with the work of the Gay Switchboard. At first I was surprised that the letters didn't draw and replies from loonies; perhaps it's the Post's new policy of demanding names and addresses for their Postbag - previously a lot of fire and brimstone has been flung around pseudonymously.

David (Nottingham)

MAJOR CHANGES IN THE CITY OF DERBY

On Thursday June 2nd a special general meeting was held for the City of Derby CHE group. At a previous business meeting it was decided that the group did not seem to have any aims and even the social scene was declining rapidly. Chris Leigh, our convenor of the past two months was to move away from Derby and a replacement would have to be found. So, the only thing to do was to organise a special meeting and inform all our members by personal letter, advising them to attend if they were interested in the group continuing and to put forward any views or criticisms for discussion.

On the big day about 20 of our members gathered at Chris Leigh's and we had a general rundown of the group at present, the two main points arising were the apparent lack of mixing socially between the two sexes and the negative attitude shown towards any potential new members attending their first CHE meeting. On the first topic Carole explained that the main reason for the women having no social interest in the group was the flourishing social scene in Nottingham on Tuesdays. The only thing which could attract the women to meetings was some sort of campaigning group perhaps joining with interested parties in Nottingham and Mansfield. A list was drawn up of interested members and we seem to have the support of the whole group towards the idea, although the actual number of members willing to brave the public was in the minority.

On the subject of new members an idea was put forward of having a 'phone-in' once a week. Phillip kindly offered the use of his home and phone for this and everyone present put their name to the list of members willing to be present to answer the phone and possibly arrange to meet new people. We had a separate meeting to discuss the plans for this new venture and I have written a separate article about this later in the newsletter.

Next came the problem of finding a new convenor - everyone new some fool would volunteer and sure enough I did! A show of hands voted me in and I arrived home later with a pile of papers and advice on how to keep my little flock of CHE members happy and gay!

After this brief session, we voted to donate £15 of the group funds to the Action for Lesbian Parents group to help in their research.

I hope that the enthusiasm shown at this meeting will continue as it is needed in our new ventures if they are to be as successful as we all hope they will be.

Chris (Derby)

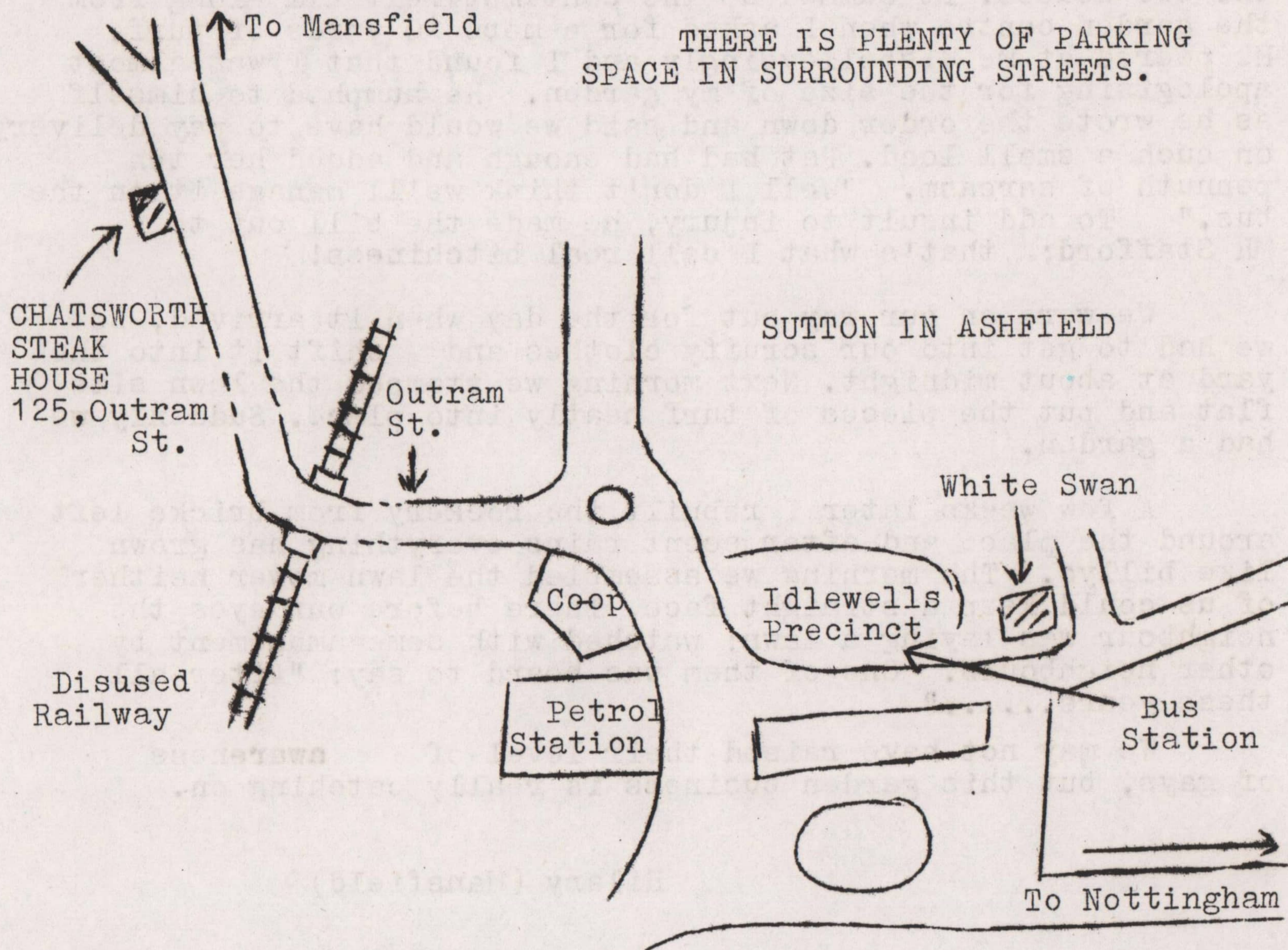
MANSFIELD A NEW MEETING PLACE

The Mansfield meetings on Wednesdays have now moved from the White Swan to a new venue, THE CHATSWORTH STEAK HOUSE on Outram St. in Sutton in Ashfield (no.125). The Steak House is open from 8 pm. and we are charging a small entrance fee to cover rent. 20p for CHE members and 30p for non-members.

The owner contacted us as a result of an advertisement we placed in the local paper. We have the place to ourselves so for the first time we have an absolutely private meeting place. The owner is fully aware what the group is. It is a first venture for him and he admits that he is learning from the experience of having our group, in order that he can provide increasingly comfortable surroundings for others too. In coming weeks it is likely that a proper bar will be fitted out in one of the upstairs rooms for instance. For those who prefer coffee, it is available and sandwiches will be made to order. At the moment we are providing our own taped music. During the evening the owner is not there himself incidentally.

A private meeting place has obvious advantages especially for those who live and work in the area and don't wish to be seen in a pub used by local people as well. It has caused a lot of problems in the past. It also means we can relax and enjoy ourselves without a licensee keeping a watchful eye. We can also use the room for discussions, speakers and any business; not to mention larger gatherings with visiting groups.

We look forward to seeing all the groups using the facilities and making it a success.



 THIS STATELY HOME

Remember Summer? It happened about three weeks ago. I wrote an article sitting in the garden but thought I had better rehash it and censure all mentions of sunshine, blue clouds, summer teashirts etc. Make it more topical. Rain, storms, floods, macs, wellies (and woollies) and other things reminiscent of Winter. Here we have lapsed into a state of shock and shiver twice as violently as we did when in Winter we were prepared for Arctic conditions. The only thing that seems to have benefited is the garden.

When we moved in it was just a heap of soil; the most convenient cat convenience in the neighborhood - and they weren't the least bit bashful in letting us know. The first that came into range got a different kind of watering. Now the tatty object that lives next door keeps a wary distance. It was pretty clear that we would have to do something more positive to deter them and give us something nicer to look at while we did the washing up. Now I'm no gardener and neither is Pat, but in true British spirit we decided to have a go.

We put in bulbs for Spring and a few other oddments, but this Spring I went mad. The list of things in our garden would read something like a botanical dictionary but the most satisfying addition was the lawn. We ordered it from a place in Mansfield and when the whole do-it-yourself kit arrived for assembly it was dumped without a word in the passage between the two houses. It summed up the contempt I felt all along from the garden centre when I asked for a mere 10 yards of turf. He peered at me disbelievingly and I found that I was almost apologising for the size of my garden. He humphed to himself as he wrote the order down and said we would have to pay delivery on such a small load. Pat had had enough and added her ten pennuth of sarcasm. "Well I don't think we'll manage it on the bus." To add insult to injury, he made the bill out to MR Stafford; that's what I call real bitchiness!

We were on our way out for the day when it arrived, so we had to get into our scruffy clothes and shift it into the yard at about midnight. Next morning we stamped the lawn site flat and put the pieces of turf neatly into place. Suddenly we had a garden.

A few weeks later I rebuilt the rockery from bricks left around the place and after recent rains everything has grown like billyo. The morning we assembled the lawn mower neither of us could keep a straight face. There before our eyes the neighbour was laying a lawn; watched with some amusement by other neighbours. One of them was heard to say: "After all these years....."

We may not have raised their level of awareness of gays, but this garden business is really catching on.

Hilary (Mansfield)

 MONEY AND THE MANSFIELD GROUP

This is a special appeal to everyone reading this newsletter as well as our own members. We are a small group in comparison to many other CHE groups, but we still have to maintain essential services. These services cost money that we have to find or the group will eventually fold.

1. Advertising - for new members costs us between £4-£6 a month, We are having to cut this ad. down to make it cheaper and it may have to go completely.
2. Travelling expenses and other expenses meeting new members we keep to a minimum, but we can't afford to subsidise the group ourselves.
3. Postage and office materials. These work out to just over £1-50 a month.
4. Renting a meeting place. This is £2 a week at the moment.

Our only income is from new members; at the basic rate of £4 a year the group gets 25% - £1. That works out to just under 2 pence a week per member. We have twelve members. We are charging entrance to the Chatsworth every Wednesday and this covers the rent.

If you can spare a little (or even a good sum!) please help us. If you have benefited from CHE, give a little back each week to help us continue to help others. If we go then who is going to care?

Hilary Stafford (Mansfield)

 NOTTINGHAM'S MPs ON GAY RIGHTS

At our AGM I was elected to organise the political and employment parts of our work and so far 4 MPs have been met.

Jim Lester(Cons.Beeston) needed 'putting in the picture' He didn't seem aware of the plight of homosexuals, but seemed genuinely interested to learn. He did not object to our proposals for amending the laws under which heterosexuals and homosexuals are treated so differently. He offered to find out the present position on the bills presented by Lords Arran and Boothby. He said the age of consent of 21 was ridiculous and was in favour of the changes proposed for gays in the Scotland Consolidation Bill amendment, which was lost. He did not realise that the situation in N.Ireland was so oppressive. He brought up the subject of so-called comedians who give a false portrayal of homosexuals in general. He does not like the National Front but feels that they should have the right to work within the democratic system and be shown up for what they are.

William Whitlock(Lab.Nottm.North) is my own MP and I was favourably impressed by him. He said that he would bear in mind the points I raised about the Criminal Law Bill when it came out of committee. He said he would also speak to a colleague concerned with this. Concerning Scottish Law, he said the attitude of the Lord Advocate in treating the situation as if it was the

NOTTINGHAM'S MPs AND GAY RIGHTS

same as England makes the law even more ridiculous. He will see what stage the bill has reached and write back to me. I mentioned CHE's official policy of 16 for the age of consent. He said that he would speak to Clement Freud about the CHE/SMG/USFI Sexual Offences bill and then write back to me. He listened attentively to what I had to say about lesbians and the custody of children.

Jack Dunnett(Lab.Nottm.East) informed us that he had voted for the '67 act after a reasonable case had been presented to him, but he doesn't see our sexual offences bill getting through. He has acted on the points we raised - writing to the Home Secretary to see if anything was about to be presented. The points we raised were the Age of Consent Bill and the Scottish Bill. We had to explain that conspiracy to corrupt public morals and outrage public decency were to be retained under the proposals before parliament.

Kenneth Clarke(Con.Rushcliffe), a lawyer, supports the right to trial by jury in importuning cases and the abolition of conspiracy to corrupt public morals and outrage public decency. We spoke generally about NCCL and he thought that NCCL went too far sometimes. He did not consider there was really any way an English MP could initiate Law reform in Scotland and N.Ireland, but he favours the law being brought into line with England and Wales. On the age of consent he admitted that he was prejudiced in favour of 21. He put forward the usual 'protection' and 'corruption' theories. It needed to be got across that homosexual refers to both men and women. He needs convincing that the law 'is an ass' when it comes to lesbian mothers. He did not know that the blasphemy law still existed. He didn't think that any sentences under this law could be heavy. He seemed to agree with the view that Mary Whitehouse would like to see Gay News close down. He did not think that homosexuals working with children was a good idea. We spoke to him about seduction and assault by both heterosexuals and homosexuals and suggested that statistics might reveal these to be more prevalent in 'heterosexual society'. He did not argue with this viewpoint. He will study the CHE/SMG/USFI bill and write to me on this.

A meeting with Michael English(Lab.Nottm West) is in the process of being arranged, but attempts to arrange meetings with Philip Holland(Con.Carlton) and Edward Bishop (Lab.Newark) have met with generally unhelpful responses. I will keep on at them and let you know the results. Remember that all correspondence with your MP is in the strictest privacy, so no one should be afraid of writing to him or her and it would be a valuable exercise if EVERYONE of you did just that, pointing out how the present laws oppress you and other gays.

I am also trying to initiate discussion with the local Liberals and hope to achieve some progress fairly soon.

Howard (Nottingham)

 CITY OF DERBY WEEKLY PHONE-IN SERVICE

Yet another special meeting was held to discuss the plans for a weekly 'Phone-in' service for the Derby area. The Derby Evening Telegraph have accepted an ad. for insertion in the Personal Column every Friday. The wording is as follows:-

Men and women contact CHE, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. Phone Derby 752260 any Friday 8-11pm for information or advice.

The aim of this is to help people who need advice on any gay subject and to arrange meetings with anyone who would like to make contact. We hope to have at least 4 members present to answer the phone, but everyone is welcome to drop in during the evening for a coffee and a chat. One good thing about having a set evening with a few members present is that we can meet anyone who wants to make contact immediately.

The 1st ad. is appearing in the Telegraph on June 24th and every Friday thereafter, so hopefully we should be well underway by the time you are reading this. Anyone is welcome to ring in if they have any questions about our events for the next two months and what a good opportunity for members to ring us incognito if they think that the group isn't doing what they would like, and didn't want to stand up and say so in public!

Chris (Derby)

 NOTTINGHAM ANTI-FASCIST COMMITTEE

As a delegate from Nottingham CHE group, I went along to my first Anti-Fascist Committee meeting on June 17th. I was impressed by the representation on the Committee and the way the campaign is being organised against the National Front.

The Committee, which is broad-based, antisexist and anti-racialist, was set up originally to leaflet areas where the National Front are active. One of its recent successful activities was to go in force to a meeting in a Mansfield Pub where the 'Front' was holding a meeting and employ non-violent direct action techniques. This was most successful. Another recent activity was to leaflet all wards where the National Front were standing in local elections.

The Committee are designing a new leaflet and stickers. Any ideas for gay-style anti-fascist stickers to Howard please as soon as possible! Nottingham and District Trades Council is running an anti-racist campaign; anyone interested on the Anti-Fascist Committee can go to meetings and I hope to attend some of their future meetings. "If you don't...." have produced a pamphlet called 'Fighting Fascism' and articles in this pamphlet will be discussed at future meetings of the A.F.C.

I have come away from my first meeting knowing no one need have any fears about extremist action. CHE are not the only ones on the Committee who would not agree with such activities.

Howard (Nottingham)

 SEBASTIANE, VASSALL, RILEY and SEABROOK

SLINGS AND ARROWS

SEBASTIANE finally arrived at Nottingham Odeon-3 in May; for many weeks we had wondered if perhaps the City Fathers had decided to ban it. This much touted film about St. Sebastian - with Latin dialogue and a lot of male nudity - stayed for two weeks, during which I saw it twice. The second viewing was more revealing than the first, for I missed quite a bit that time, while waiting for the 'sexy' bits and trying to see if I could still understand the schoolboy Latin being spoken ('Te amo', 'Agite, milites, pugnate'). Now a month later it resides in my memory as a film full of sound and fury signifying - what?

The film is a mixture: a male gay fantasy (bare bums on the sand, games in the dorm, flagellation at night); an 'arty' art film (the sub-KenRussell orgy at the start with the Lindsay Kemp troupe, the view of the kneeling soldiers seen through Sebastiane's eyes (shot with a fish-eye lens) the slow motion love scene between the two soldiers; a name dropping piece with 'in' jokes about Cecil B. de Mille, Claudette Colbert, Fellini and Chesty Morgan. The film as a whole did not make as great an impression on me as, for instance, 'A Bigger Splash'. What I do remember are the small scenes: the loving smiles of the two men as they make love; the fact that gayness is accepted, even by Max, the rabid het; the intriguing idea that perhaps Sebastiane is referring to Severus and not God when he speaks of his love, which makes his refusal of Severus' advances all the more regrettable.

While the makers of the film have hinted that it shows a positive attitude towards gayness, I have a niggling feeling that it's just as oppressive as other films. The small group of soldiers are miles away from city life, they talk about going back to the whores of Rome, some damning comments are made about the faggots of Greece and the captain of the guards kills the man he loves because the latter refuses his advances: does this seem positive? No, I think the makers wanted to make a fantasy and they did. Perhaps everyone has read too much into it because it shows male nudity in more detail than any film before. Quite a brave little film, that deserves some marks for effort; it's a pity it tended at times to look like 'Boys in the Sand' (on the other hand, those boys were rather nice).

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1650 years later we are in the world of spies. VASSALL: Autobiography of a spy (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1975) is the story of John Vassall, sentenced in 1962 for spying for the Russians. He was employed at the British Embassy in Moscow from 1953 until 1955, during which time the Russian Secret Service blackmailed him into espionage after taking photographs at a homosexual party. Back in Britain he passed information to the USSR from 1955 until his capture, the Burgess and Maclean spy sensation causing the only halt in his activities. Vassall was released in 1974.

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Described as frank and revealing, the book is nothing of the sort. True, he describes his life in Russia, how his gayness was used against him, and his life in prison in the UK. But the numerous trips made to Stockholm, Riviera, USA etc with his 'friends' made it read like a travelogue; there is no description of the work that he did in Russia or London (perhaps this may be because it was top secret - even so, some account of life in the corridors of power would have helped). There is an apology for being homosexual and he thinks at one point that marriage would have cured him. He uses the word gay twice, once in inverted commas!

The impression comes over of an ineffectual, secretive man which Vassall strenuously denies he is. The first half, until his return from Russia, reads like any spy story - and is quite gripping; the second part is unconvincing and unintentionally hilarious at times. One example: after his release he 'telephoned my favourite aunt and my psychiatrist who had helped me so much. I looked out of the window and saw more squirrels playing in the garden: did nature understand how grateful I was to see all this natural harmony flowing back into me?.... more and more impressions and ideas of the past come flowing back into my mind. Times in Russia, Italy, Egypt and America and the many friends I had all over the world. Now in the presence of friends I could recall all these people clearly and the moments of pleasure, excitement, drama, sadness" (pg.183). Beverley Nichols writes, OK?

BRIEFLY:

Elizabeth Riley - All That False Instruction (Angus & Robertson 1975): a very worthwhile novel. The coming out of Australian Maureen Craig: her search for fulfilment with girls at college and after that with a fisherman. Her conclusion is that men are so much more insensitive to women, especially during the act of love. Equally, the girls she loved could not stand up to the pressure of society when parents found out. At the end of the book, Maureen is alone but the reader knows she has found hope for the future and that she will be a vital force in the feminist movement. Maureen's mother is the 'one you love to hate' and perhaps a little overdone. Otherwise, very good.

Jeremy Seabrook - A Lasting Relationship. (Allen Lane 1976): a collection of interviews with gay men mixed with Seabrook's own comments. The latter are full of jargon and seem to be flogging to death his thesis that gays are a force in society because of consumerism (or some such idea). When he tries to introduce this idea into a discussion at a University Gaysoc, the people there don't quite know what he's getting at. But even without commentary it would seem to be a downer of a book: hardly a smiling face among the interviewees, which may be the impression that the author intends. And yet ... some little idea manages to break through, to give the reader pause for thought: 'There's no such thing as friends; everybody's out for sex, and those who go on about friends are just those who can't get it' (Sharon, mid-forties) of a CHE meeting: 'The comradeship is essentially a product of isolation and the lack of a much-desired personal relationship. Very few people are in it out of idealism or for ideological reasons'. An irritating book that one can't forget in a hurry.

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