

June 1982

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CHIMAERA

JUNE 1982

This, as you will soon see and read, is not the usual style of issue of Chimaera. Apologies for the variations in type face as we have put the newsletter together from a variety of sources at a fast speed and at the last minute.

It is the final edition of Chimaera, but not of a newsletter for gay people in Nottingham. The Newsletter will attempt to clarify the situation that has developed in Nottingham with regard to CHE, past and future, the newly formed Nottingham Gay Social Group, Nottingham Gay Switchboard and the links between all three groups. We usually begin with a programme of social events and will do so here, but these come under events organised by the Nottingham Gay Social Group.

PROGRAMME

JUNE

- WED 2nd Andy's Video Night - at 1, Burnham Lodge, Rise Park.  
The films are Carrie and the Revenge of the Pink Panther; there's a charge of 25p for coffee/food and films start at 8 pm - so be prompt.
- SUN 6th Group discussion at 20, Chippendale Street, off Castle Boulevard, from 6 pm. - all welcome.
- FRI 11th Quiz at Mike's - 19, Thomas Close, St. Ann's Nottingham. Start at 8pm.
- MON 21st Programme meeting at CVS at 8pm - all welcome.
- SUN.27th Group discussion at 20, Chippendale St. off Castle Boulevard. 6 pm start.
- TUE 29th Ice skating. Meet at the Cricketers Pub at 7.30 pm to depart promptly at 8pm.

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In July there will probably be a party at Russell and Philip's 10a, The Arcade, Newark - this is to be confirmed.

There will definitely be a TRIP TO BLACKPOOL staying overnight in a gay hotel. The details of this are as follows:-

The coach will leave the Victoria Centre Bus Station at 8.15 am on Saturday 31st JULY. So meet at the CVS at 8am prompt. Arriving in Blackpool at 1pm. The total cost, including coach fare and Bed and Breakfast is only £14-95 and this must be paid to Vincent by Thursday 1st July. The coach returns from Blackpool at 2.15 pm on the Sunday and arrives back in Nottingham at 7.45 pm. We are NOT dependent on having a set number of people on the trip so it is DEFINITELY GOING AHEAD.

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There is JUST time to inform those interested of a Gay Outdoor Club walk on the Tissington Trail on SUNDAY MAY 30th. Details from Switchboard on Thursday May 27th.

NOTTINGHAM C.H.E. IS DEAD! - LONG LIVE NOTTINGHAM C.H.E.!

Depending on whether or not they are regular visitors at CVS, readers of this will or will not be aware of the discontent that was rife among some members of the group as regards National CHE in the latter weeks of 1981 and the early part of this year. It was widely felt that much valuable time had been lost for gay people by the discussions with which CHE had preoccupied itself for two years, and the question was being raised as to whether we in Nottingham should continue to link ourselves to an organisation that seemed to be dying on its feet or whether we should not make a break and strike out independently: those with an interest in campaigning would still be able to indulge it; our presence at CVS would enable the continued provision of a social base for those who wanted it; financially the group was sound enough for such a step, indeed, would become even more so by taking it. There was nothing to block the road to I.D.I.!

Then, at CHE's March National Council held in New Brighton, "Plan 82" was revealed. At last proposals were ready to be put to CHE's member groups, a plan designed to make CHE into an efficient campaigning organisation for the future. Mild consternation in Nottingham! Copies of these proposals were circulated amongst interested members and were (seemingly endlessly) discussed - at CVS, at Part Two, in bars, in cars, even in bed for anything I know to the contrary. An Executive Committee member and a dignitary of the new Gay Community Organisation (GCO) came to explain it all to us, and as it was realised that what was being proposed was quite compatible with what we had been thinking of doing anyway, the group's AGM in April not only gave its support to Plan 82, but actually started to implement it.

So what change does it involve? How will it change the situation at CVS? When do we vote on the new, 70-page constitution which will be needed to put Plan 82 into effect? Answers: very little; hardly at all; we don't (respectively).

As I said, Plan 82 is designed to make CHE an effective campaigning organisation - that and nothing more. Members will join in order to campaign and will be expected to do so. There will be no social or caring involvement such as many local CHE groups have at present, our own included. These will be taken care of by the new GCO with which CHE will obviously maintain close liaison. If the proposals are endorsed by the National Council at Hastings in June this change will be set in motion, with the aim of effecting the transition by the autumn. Current members will be offered the chance to opt for the new campaigning CHE: those who do not will automatically have their membership transferred to the GCO on the transition date, and this membership will run until the expiration of the one they at present have in CHE. They will then have to decide whether or not they want to renew.

That is the national picture. What about here in Nottingham? What will be the effect on own members? In effect there will be little difference in what goes on in Nottingham, certainly on the surface, although some backstage changes have been necessary. Nottingham CHE is a group now devoted to campaigning only. Since its membership is unlikely to be substantially more than 6-8 people it will no longer need to meet in the CVS premises, although it will probably remain affiliated and may continue to receive mail there.

On the social side, the programme of events CHE used to organise will in future be handled by the new Nottingham Gay Social Group, which gets a mention elsewhere in this newsletter. This group will continue to operate informal meetings at CVS on Mondays and Thursdays as well as to run events outside detailed in their programme, and the responsibility for the newsletter will also be handed over to them.

It is up to the members of ex-Nottingham CHE to decide what they personally are going to do. ALL will still be members of National CHE until their present subscription runs out. If this subscription remains current until after the

national transition date they will be asked if they wish to be registered as members of the new CHE (campaigning only): if so they will be allotted to a local group or a group campaigning around a particular issue (eg. employment); if not, then their membership will be transferred to the GCO.

Locally, there are five options:

- 1) To join the local CHE group: this involves nothing financially, but members will have to pay an agreed membership to the National Organisation, the level of which is proposed at £3. This will only become due once their current CHE membership has run its course.
- 2) To join the Nottingham Gay Social Group: details about this are given elsewhere.
- 3) To join both.
- 4) To join neither - but we hope that no-one will be so deterred by the change as to want to do this!
- 5) To become a Supporting Member of National CHE: National CHE is quite aware that many of its members recognise the value and necessity of the work CHE is trying to do, but that they themselves do not want to become involved in that work. As a result they pay their subscription to CHE but take no part in the campaigning. Well, they will still be able to do this by becoming supporting members. This involves undertaking to make a regular monthly payment (ideally £5, but less will not be turned down) by bankers order. Money raised in this way will provide the bulk of the finance needed to maintain a national office and to fund the ongoing campaigning. Supporting Members will receive an annual report and be able to attend the annual conference in order to exercise a voice in the broad policy-making of CHE. All members should soon be receiving a leaflet explaining this scheme more fully.

The situation looks far more complicated than it in fact is, but I'm well aware that in trying to explain it I may not have done so clearly by virtue of the fact that I am becoming familiar with what is happening and taking some things for granted. If there are people reading this who are still confused over any aspect of it, please get in touch with me and I'll try and explain it and answer any questions they may have. I'm usually at CVS on Monday and Thursday evenings at some stage; my home telephone number is 55196, but I'm warning you that I'm not the easiest person to find at home - between 6 and 7 in the evenings are the most likely times to get me.

My thanks go out to those who have in the past given their time and effort to running Nottingham CHE Mark I in whatever capacity. May the Mark II version receive a similar response and go on to even greater achievements.

Mike Raymond.

NOTTINGHAM GAY SWITCHBOARD

Nottingham Gay Switchboard exists to give help, information and advice on all matters which concern homosexual women and men and operates on Nottingham 46714 between 7 and 10pm every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

At the time of writing there are 14 operators and 1 probationer (all male) who undertake duties, two at a time, once in every seven sessions or approximately once every 2½ weeks in addition to regular meetings incorporating ongoing training every other month.

By the time you read this a new training programme lasting approximately six weeks will have commenced.

Since the Switchboard started several years ago (as a part of CHE) it has steadily grown in frequency of operation, number of calls received and, hopefully, efficiency of service and is now a fully autonomous organisation with its own Constitution, administration and finances. Nottingham Gay Switchboard is affiliated to the Council for Voluntary Service and to the National Association of Gay Switchboards (for whom it acted as Secretariat in 1981/82) and although the Switchboard actively encourages support from and co-operation with other gay and non gay organisations, help agencies, and the local 'gay scene' it is totally separate from them.

The type and number of calls vary immensely but during 1981 a total of nearly 1400 calls were received. 94% of these were by telephone and the remainder by personal contact or letter. Every single call is treated in the strictest confidence. These calls can be classified as follows:-

36%	GENERAL INFORMATION	- Pubs/Clubs, Gay Groups, What's on, etc.
5%	ACCOMMODATION	- Permanent/Temporary/Emergency/Flat Shares/Hotels, etc.
2½%	LEGAL	- Mainly men arrested for so called gay offences. (We have an up to date panel of sympathetic lawyers)
22½%	PROBLEMS	- Isolation/Coming out/Elderly/Young/Bereavement/Relationship Break ups/Suicidal, etc.
10%	TV - TS	- Specific calls from or about Transvestites and Transsexuals
10%	SILENT	- Caller unable to make verbal contact
3%	HOAX/ABUSIVE	- Usually from fairly young people
9%	ADMINISTRATIVE	- New info/Operator messages, etc.
8%	OTHER	- Miscellaneous calls which fit into none of the other categories

(The total exceeds 100% as some calls cover more than one subject)

In order to give accurate and unbiased information to callers with problems the Switchboard co-operates extensively with other caring organisations and in return, by being known to these organisations, the Switchboard receives referrals from them. This is a valuable source of referral but also has very important 'political' implications in the quest for equality and acceptance. Some of the organisations that have referred callers to us include: The Samaritans, the Probation Service, Social Service Departments, Citizens Advice Bureau, City Information Office, Nottingham Counselling Centre, Doctors and Clergy. On a lighter note, perhaps the accolade for us was a referral from Marje Proops!

Many other referrals, of course, come from other Gay services; particularly London Gay Switchboard and a considerable number of callers for local information about 'the scene' find our number from Gay News. But a vast majority of gay people that are not out or are experiencing problems with their being gay for the first time do not read - or even know of - Gay News; nor are they familiar with the gay scene and also are not likely to be aware that services like Gay Switchboard even exist to help them. The only solution to this is local advertising.

Most of the advertising that we do in Nottingham is by advertisements in the personal columns of the local press. Unfortunately, the Evening Post and most of its subsidiaries will not print our advert in spite of a year long campaign in which we received tremendous support from all sorts of people - mainly heterosexual - who were aware of the value of our service and the need for it to be advertised. The chain of newspapers owned by the Derbyshire Times Group also display the same bigotry. Currently we advertise weekly in the new Nottingham Trader, fortnightly in Mansfield CHAD and monthly in the Long Eaton Advertiser, Stapleford & Sandiacre News and the Beeston Gazette. Until its recent demise we advertised in Nottingham News and also the Newark Advertiser and South Notts Advertiser (for a time sharing the cost of the latter two with Lincoln Gay Switchboard).

There are a few other 'free papers' that are prepared to carry our ads but they have very small circulations and are not much read. Of course, the final decision on press advertising is limited by funds available. And just to continue at our present frequency of advertising during the forthcoming twelve months will cost us £300.

We occasionally place 'one off' ads in special publications, we have leaflets that we distribute, we talk to other groups, and we have taken part in a number of local radio programmes.

Our biggest headache - as always - is raising sufficient money to keep the service operating. No extraneous expense is permitted but even so it is impossible to run the service adequately for less than £450 a year. Inflation alone costs us a pound a week! Without the support of NCVS and their provision of a phone and rooms at a peppercorn rent it is unlikely the service would be able to afford to exist. We receive no official grant or financial support and rely on our sales of Gay News at CVS and in the pubs and clubs, benefits and donations to keep afloat. We are grateful for the support and large amount of money donated in the past by Nottingham CHE and also to Nottingham University Students' Karnival Committee who have donated £200 over the last 3 years. We are also pleased to learn that the new Nottingham Gay Social Group have adopted the principal of financial support to us.

We thank you, not only ourselves, but on behalf of the SIX THOUSAND gay people who have contacted us so far.

NOTTINGHAM GAY SWITCHBOARD

Homosexual? Bisexual?

Help, information and advice for gay women and men from Gay Switchboard. Nottingham 46714 every Monday, Wednesday or Thursday from 7 - 10pm or write c/o 31a Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

The above is a typical ad which would cost us between £3 and £4. We place at least 90 such ads a year in local papers.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Send a donation - however large - to NOTTINGHAM GAY SWITCHBOARD

Underwrite the cost of an ad for a week, a month or even a year! .

Buy your GAY NEWS from us instead of a shop or by direct subscription.

Support the GAY SWITCHBOARD BENEFIT NIGHT at Part Two later in the year.

Encourage your group to raise funds for GAY SWITCHBOARD.

COULD YOU BE AN OPERATOR?

If you are out (or started to come out to yourself), if you can communicate with others, if you have an awareness of gay organisations and the commercial gay scene, if you have one night every two weeks or so to spare, if you want to help in any way then we want to hear from you.

NOTTINGHAM GAY SWITCHBOARD  
c/o 31a Mansfield Road  
Nottingham.

Telephone NOTTINGHAM 46714 46714 46714 46714 46714 46714 46714

Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 7 and 10pm.

For those that haven't already got one, the newsletter includes a copy of the current Nottingham Gay Switchboard leaflet.

NOTTINGHAM GAY SOCIAL GROUP

Well! Here we are?

Who?

A group of gays from in and around Nottingham (mostly men at present, but gay women are welcome) trying to provide a friendly environment for gays to meet one another in a more relaxed atmosphere than is available in the commercial pubs and clubs.

What does the group do?

The main aims of the group are befriending, caring and social. The befriending and caring functions are centered at 31a, Mansfield Road where the CVS (Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service) lets us use rooms between 7 and 10 pm on Mondays and Thursdays. Here gays can meet and talk over experiences in a way that isn't possible on the commercial scene. Nottingham Gay Switchboard also use the premises - as do other self-help groups in Nottingham.

Is the group linked to them at all?

One of the main roles of the group is to help people just beginning to come out. Gay Switchboard uses the group as a first introduction to other gay people for isolated gays. Group members are expected to welcome and talk to such 'new' gays and to support them in coming to terms with their sexuality. Group members who have experience of the commercial scene, for example, will be expected to take such people down to the clubs and pubs and ensure that they are made to feel part of a friendly group and not alone in a crowd. Another link between the group and Gay Switchboard is that the group tries to support Switchboard financially.

What does that involve?

Not much really. 25p is collected from regular attenders at the CVS on Mondays and Thursdays. Some of this is needed to pay for the use of the rooms and providing coffee. Full members of the group pay a small annual subscription of £3 - but it's £1 if you are unwaged i.e. a student, unemployed or retired. More established group members are asked to try to sell (and buy themselves) copies of Gay News which will be on sale at the CVS and which provides funding for the Switchboard.

What about the social side?

Members of the group run a social programme of functions outside the CVS premises. The nature of these depends on the wishes of the members as the planning is done by the whole group at a once monthly meeting open to all at the CVS (The Programme Meeting - but don't feel that you have to wait until then to get your imagination working and to investigate possibilities). The social programme in this newsletter is an example, but if you can think of anything that you'd like to do please let someone know. Some people see this side of the group as an addition to the commercial scene, others as an alternative, so the social programme needs to be as broad as possible.



NOTTINGHAM GAY SOCIAL GROUP ( CONTINUED)

How is the group run?

To avoid discouraging new members with tedious business meetings, the group is run by a committee which meets away from the CVS at members homes. To try and encourage people who wish to be involved, these are open meetings and any group members are encouraged to come along.

What will I get out of the group?

That depends rather on what you're looking for. You'll find that it's possible to make a lot of gay friends. You will find tea and sympathy when things are going bad and a shoulder to cry on, but most of all you'll find a group of people who care. There is a social programme which every member will receive (if you can't get along to the CVS it can be posted to you in the same way that Chimaera is posted now). If our social events interest you, you might find that you get involved enough to help plan parts of the social programme or try to help other gays who may not find coming out as easy as you.

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And that is almost that. One thing that we need is a new title, logo or cover for the newsletter. Lots of interesting ideas to put in it NEXT TIME. More copyright breaking cartoons. More useless bits of news such as:-

The lorry of strawberry preserve which overturned on the M6 - motorists were asked to avoid it to prevent a jam.

Or entries for Opera Monthlys Sponsorship competition. This was initiated because Glyndebourne's new production of the Love of Three Oranges is being sponsored by Cointreau. The magazine suggested that Carmen might be sponsored by British Leyland and then asked for further ideas. So far we have got

Nabucco by Nabisco  
 The Rakes Progress by Wilkinson tools  
 The Flying Dutchman by KLM  
 and The Nose by Kleenex.