

Leisure

Softball

Early season report

THE East Midlands Softball League got off to a bang this year with 10 local sides competing for the coveted Number 1 spot. Broxtowe Softball Club currently has two teams in the league, the Beeston Beavers and the Alea Alleycats.

The Beeston Beavers have had a mixed start to their campaign. Wins against the Pyros Juniors (5-2) and Nottingham Brewers (13-11) have placed the Beavers seventh in the league. Their most recent game saw the Beavers lose to the league leaders, the Pyros. This was despite an excellent first home run from Sandiacre's Ray Harrison.

The ninth-placed Alea

Alleycats have fared slightly less well so far this season, losing five games and winning only one. Offensively, the team has been excellent, scoring a total of 76 runs – more than the four teams directly above them in the league table. However, they have struggled defensively, and this has cost them some important points.

Of particular note was their game against the Leicester Royals, which they won 25-17.

Coaching from the USA

In May, the East Midlands Softball League was lucky enough to be joined by three expert American softball

coaches. Specialist coaching clinics were set up to improve players' batting and fielding techniques.

Also in May, the East Midlands Softball League had their All-Star team try-outs. This team presents the best players in the league and to be picked is an honour. Broxtowe Softball Club will be represented by Jason Smith, Jenny Page and Natalie Baker in the Silver team and Colette Gardner, Alex Keegan and Zach Schmidt in the Gold team.

Broxtowe Softball Club plays most Thursday nights on the Chilwell Olympia field. Games start at 6pm and anyone interested in trying out a new sport is welcome!

Cycling

Beeston to Colston Basset Bike Ride

ALMOST 30 riders met in Beeston Square on Saturday, May 31, for a new-style Rural Ride. The ride had been billed as a fast ride for wannabe club riders, hosted by Beeston Road Club. There were plenty of MAMILs (Middle Aged Men in Lycra) evident – but a young lady on a heavy, single-speed shopper with upside-down handlebars and a basket – who didn't even break a sweat – outclassed all! Other bikes included a tandem, a few mountain bikes, hybrids and a folder. All were made equally welcome.

Kathy Holmes, who had never ridden as far as 40 miles before, confessed: "When I saw all the smart bikes and Lycra I was really worried. I thought I'd never keep up and it would be a bit cliquy. But I can honestly say I have really enjoyed myself. Everyone has been so friendly – and no-one was left behind! I would definitely do another ride like this again."

Even a snapped gear cable did not prevent the riders completing the course and enjoying the sunshine – the group included experienced roadies well able to deal

with such problems. The ride included the inevitable stops for those wishing to buy cheese and lunch in a pub garden.

Another event will be planned for approximately six weeks' time.

In the meantime, more local Rural Rides are available:

11 June 16.15pm
Bramcote Park car park to
Cossall (off-road tracks)

Full details of the rides and more are available on www.ridewise.org.uk/rural-rides

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

Incinerator plans go up in smoke

THE announcement by the government that permission to build a waste disposal plant and incinerator at the former Rufford colliery sorting facility has been refused is great news for Rainworth heath and the wildlife areas that surround it.

Readers may recall the coverage of this area in previous editions of this column. Although much of it is post-industrial and may at first glance seem less than promising for wildlife it does, in fact, contain a wide range of habitats. These include standing and recently cleared conifer plantations, broadleaf woodland and a few areas of grassland. The jewel in the crown is the heathland that has been created on an area of dumped coal waste.

This project was initiated more than fifteen years ago and has now developed very well, maturing into a wildlife habitat of a type that is increasingly scarce.

As well as a diversity of plants and mosses, the heath supports a number of characteristic bird species. The presence of meadow pipits and, perhaps to a lesser extent, reed warblers which nest around the lake which has also been created on the heath – two of the species in whose nests it lays its eggs – is likely to be a reason for the cuckoos attracted to the area. These have been heard and, for dedicated and lucky wildlife watchers, seen every year for at least the last five. This species is currently of conservation concern and its regular presence here is just one reason that the area is of such wildlife importance.

The heathland at Rainworth is habitat creation at its best resulting, as it has, in a rich wildlife environment where before there was sterile and lifeless landscape. The method of achieving this has been proved to be sound and there is a much larger adjoining area just waiting for the same treatment. If the incinerator plans were an obstacle to this happening then its removal should, hopefully, assist an extension of this heathland re-creation.

The heath has, however, certainly had its problems in the past, not least from the many dirt bikes and four wheel drive vehicles that used to use it a racetrack! These activities caused considerable damage to the heath and, although they have now almost ceased, many of the affected areas have hardly recovered at all. In the undamaged areas there are still issues to address. Heathland needs management to prevent it reverting to woodland. The best way of achieving this is by the grazing of herbivores, either wild or domesticated. Although there are deer in the area, they are not in the numbers that could make any significant impact and the unfenced and open layout of

the heath makes it unsuitable for grazing by domestic animals.

As a result, management has to be by human hand. This includes the removal of trees which become established. This has already been done with conifers but looks like it will also need to be done with silver birch. The heather also needs to be managed to provide the varied age structure that maximizes its value to wildlife. This involves periodic cutting of the heather but the re-growth from the most recent cut has been poor due to the

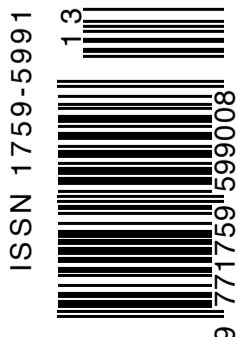
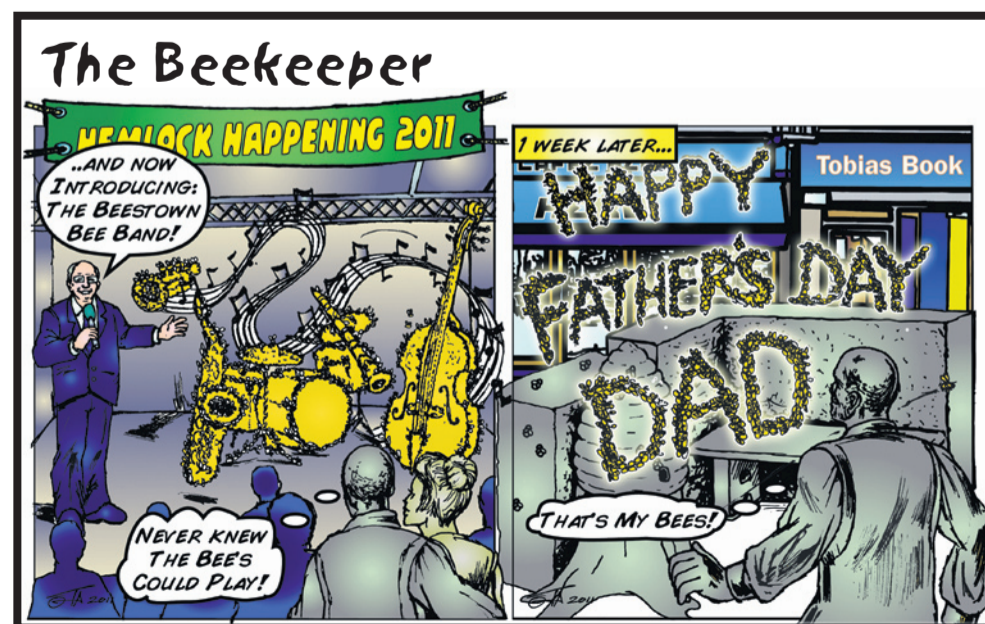
particularly dry spring.

The minister who made the refusal decision, Eric Pickles, might be to some an unlikely wildlife champion but the potential of the incinerator project to damage wildlife in the area was identified as the principal reason for his making it – assisted no doubt by the extensive and detailed evidence presented to him by a number of parties, especially Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

Although it is possible that an appeal could be lodged, the level at which this decision was made

should ensure that it stands and that the wildlife interest of the areas that would have been degraded or lost can now be both protected and increased. Whilst wildlife may win, the losers will be council taxpayers. The costs of the incinerator proposal already run into millions of pounds and its cancellation will have implications for future waste disposal costs. The applicants, almost defiantly, stated that there was no 'Plan B'. Events have proved that there really should have been.

Jack Smith
Local ecologist



Thought for the Fortnight

YOU come into the world crying whilst all around you are smiling.

Live your life so that you leave it smiling whilst all around you are crying.