

Leisure

Tennis

Court the Wimbledon bug? Play at Attenborough Lawn Tennis Club

AS Wimbledon fever grips the nation, Attenborough Tennis Club is serving strawberries and cream – and a chance to play and join – on Sunday, June 26.

The small, friendly club on Shady Lane, Attenborough, is holding an Open Day in the middle of Wimbledon fortnight to give people a chance to get on court themselves.

All ages and abilities are welcome to come along between 2pm and 4pm – and the first 30 visitors will be treated to the traditional Wimbledon dish

of strawberries and cream. Coaches will be on hand to give expert help and to entertain the children. If you like what you see, you can discuss a number of different ways of joining the club, or coming along for regular 'Pay & Play' sessions.

Club secretary Sorriya Richeux said: "Murraymania will be giving everyone a taste for tennis so there's no better time to see what a local club can offer.

"Attenborough Tennis Club has been in one of the most charming settings in Nottinghamshire for over 100

years and we'd love to see more people making use of its facilities.

"If you've never played, or if it's been a while since you got out your racquet, or if you'd like to receive coaching and play against equally skilled players to improve your technique, our Open Day is a great chance to come down to give it a go."

For more information please contact club secretary Sorriya Richeux on 07812 206 631, or visit www.attenboroughtennis.org.uk

Cycling

Beeston bikers celebrate summer

BIKERS from Beeston have again been breaking new ground at local community events. To celebrate the 'Hemlock Happening' on June 11, a Rural Ride community ride left Beeston and headed to Bramcote Park, where Broxtowe Borough Council announced the launch of the Erewash Valley Trail. This scenic route follows waterways north to Eastwood and south to Attenborough and the river Trent (see page 14). There are about 30 miles to explore by bike, with many points of interest marked along the way. The route utilises mainly traffic-free trails and paths and is flat – ideal for all types of rider.

After Broxtowe Councillor Stan Heptinstall had cut the ribbon, a second Rural Ride took off to explore the first few miles of the trail. Hugh McClintock, leading the ride, said: "The trail gives you the impression of being miles from anywhere – right out in the sticks – yet all the time, busy roads and market towns are close by. It's fantastic!"

Beeston Cycling Club were also out in force at the 30th Great Nottinghamshire Bike Ride. Their distinctive red and green jerseys could be seen blasting up the hills of the 72-mile route, until one member's rear mechanism fell off, literally, just like

that! As members struggled to conjure a fix, Mick Hart, who runs P&H Cycles, complained: "Even at work my hands don't get this dirty!"

Coming up:
July 13 at 7pm
Around Beeston

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

Springwatch – still a good watch?

FOR many wildlife enthusiasts, the television series Springwatch is one of the highlights of the year. Not only does it present a chance to observe some of our native wildlife in a way that it is usually impossible for most people, but it also adds a wealth of information to help viewers understand what they are watching. In itself, it has added to the stock of scientific knowledge by recording behaviour of some species that has never been seen before.

This approach has developed over the history of the programme and has been aided by the presence of Chris Packham and Simon King – presenters with a background in the serious study of wildlife.

Simon King now seems to be a permanent loss from this programme, and it may be

that he saw what was required of him and declined to be involved. If Springwatch can be called 'infotainment' then it would seem that, for this series, someone decided that the information element of this term should be shoved to the background and that entertainment should be brought the fore.

The injection of a 'wow' factor seemed to be particularly important and the presenters appeared to be required to say "wow" and look excited as much as possible. The team monitoring the various cameras, now continually referred to as 'story developers', had apparently been charged with the task of not just observing and recording the behaviour of their subjects but, more importantly, turning this – particularly the live footage – into an exciting 'story'. When the wildlife story failed to be exciting enough, a number of pre-recorded items

only loosely connected with Springwatch were aired – a waste of airtime given the material that was available to be shown.

Whatever instructions were handed out regarding the style and content of the programme, those making them soon discovered that wildlife presenters, like wildlife itself, couldn't always be trusted to behave reliably and to order. Because the programme is broadcast live, this behaviour was there for all to see. Although there were signs of discontent amongst the other presenters, this had its most obvious manifestation in Chris Packham.

When he was not going 'over the top' in the more excitable sequences he was dropping veiled and not-so-veiled comments indicating his discontent, particularly with the 'info-ban' which restricted the provision of his usual supply of background facts about the wildlife in the programme. When he began to weave the titles and lines of popular songs into his presentation, wasn't that a sign of his disdain for the new direction of the programme and of his inability to take it seriously?

This continued for the first two weeks of this year's Springwatch but in the third there was a noticeable and

welcome change. Gone was the obsessive search for the 'wow' factor and exciting live stories. Flashy t-shirts were replaced by sensible wildlife-watching apparel and the ban on too many wildlife facts was also relaxed.

The result was a return to the style of previous series – strong on coverage from the cameras and on material that makes it such a valuable educational resource but short on the sort of gimmicks which had characterised the previous two weeks.

This change probably occurred as a result of some heated production meetings and it was a pity that one of the cameras could not have been trained on these. It might

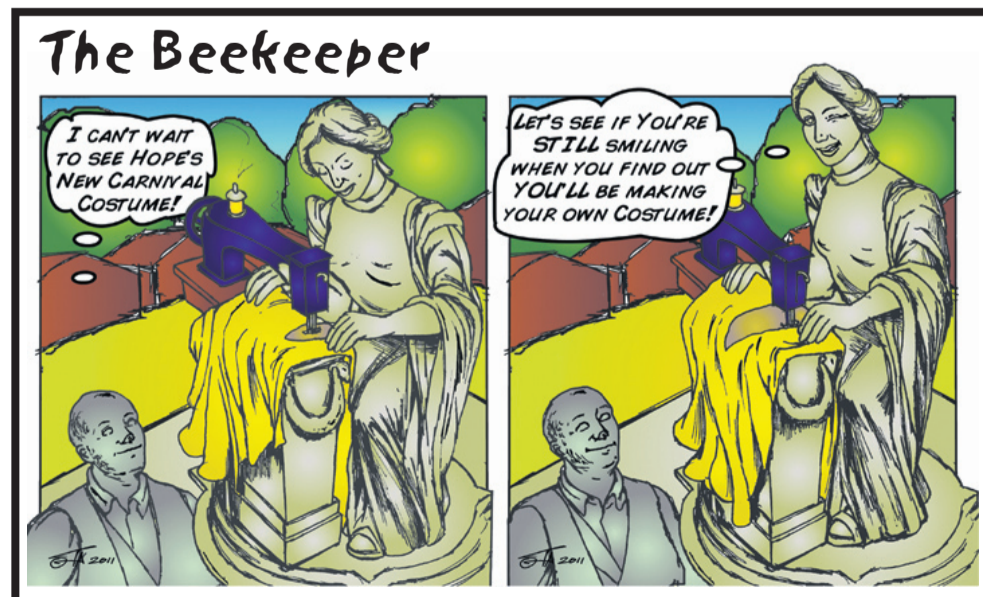
have offered the opportunity for some seldom-seen 'wild behaviour' to be witnessed by those paying for it – the license payers! It is a pretty safe bet that the some of the strongest calls for a return to the style of previous series would have come from Chris Packham. Only time will tell whether his reward for this will be to join Bill Oddie and Simon King on the list of former Springwatch presenters.

It is a sad fact in this country that if you enjoy, appreciate and value something you can never be sure that someone will not come along and mess it up. The culprit in the case of Springwatch was

probably a BBC executive who decided that, in view of its high production costs, it should appeal to as many people as possible and that this should be achieved by jazzing up and dumbing down, with little concern that this might disappoint and alienate some of the viewers whose continued support for the programme helped to justify its large budget in the first place!

A useful, though seemingly seldom employed, maxim for these circumstances would be – before throwing out the bathwater, check for the presence of bathers!

Jack Smith
Local ecologist



Thought for the Fortnight

Reach for the stars.
You may not touch one,
but neither will you
end up with a
handful of mud.

