

Leisure

Rugby

Injuries affect Green & White's performance against Cornish Pirates

WITH playing resources stretched to the limit, Nottingham Rugby will hope to halt a worrying run of four straight defeats when they take on Birmingham and Solihull at Meadow Lane this weekend.

Two of those defeats, away from home, have been narrow, and the Green and Whites can claim some degree of misfortune as

they have clawed their way into a winning position only to have victory snatched away in the dying minutes.

Their last two home games have seen them well beaten though, by Bedford Blues and Cornish Pirates. However, Director of Rugby Glenn Delaney is a long way from hitting the panic button.

"We are struggling quite

badly with injuries," he said, "but we still have a lot of fight in us and we know we have something to prove to the Meadow Lane crowd who support us so well.

"There can be no time for getting downbeat, we have faced a massively difficult run of games where some of the results haven't quite gone our way, but the side is looking forward and is

even more determined to make things right.

"We have to try and protect players from injury. Rotation has been a key element of this year's strategy for our season-long goals, and that system will benefit for us greatly when we need to call on fresher players in the spring."

The first stage of the season culminates in the New Year when the top

eight sides in the division will split into two play-off promotion pools before the spring semi-finals between the two top placed sides from both pools and a two-legged final.

Athletics

Success in Munich

BEESTON Athletics Club, in Munich for the Munich Marathon series races, had a successful and enjoyable weekend recently.

Spokesman Tony Rushton said: "The running conditions were perfect and a well organised event had the bonus of finishing in the 1972 Munich Olympics Stadium.

"Notable results we carried away from the weekend were John O'Donnell finishing first in the Over 60s, a third for Rab Acid in the Over 55s and a personal best for Anthony Williamson."

Information on Beeston AC can be obtained from John O'Donnell. Tel: (0115) 922 3047 or 07719 318 184.

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

IN what must appear to be a recurring nightmare for local residents and lovers of the area, news has emerged of yet another application to establish an opencast coal mine in the Robinetts area near to both Cossall and Trowell.

The proposed application from UK Coal would either destroy, or have a serious impact on, an area which has cultural and recreational importance and real value to wildlife.

Cossall is very much part of D H Lawrence country and was the setting for some of his works, making it something of a tourist attraction. The area has been developed, and is well used, for recreational use by walkers and cyclists.

It is also rich in wildlife due to the diversity of habitats it contains. There are areas of woodland, mature hedgerows with individual trees that would have been standing

in Lawrence's time, pasture and arable land as well as the abandoned old Robinetts mine site and the canal that served it.

Another attraction of the area is its accessibility. There are opportunities to get there, with a short walk, from points that are well served by public transport, Balloon Woods, for example. Cycle access is also good, particularly along the canal.

Some might assume that the proximity of the M1 to the west of the area might make it a bad choice for a little 'peace and quiet'. Whilst the recent widening of this road was damaging to roadside wildlife habitats, the surface that was laid seems to produce much less tyre noise than before.

Insect interest

Although plant and insect interest will be limited at this time of year, there is still plenty of wildlife to watch

in the area. There are a few highlights, in particular a group of four buzzards, which have been regularly seen in the skies recently. This is likely to be a family group with parents on the wing with this year's young – an indication that they are successfully using the area for breeding.

A little harder to spot are the grey partridge which are present in the area. The margins around the arable fields might be a good place to look. It is also possible, if you are very lucky, to see quite large numbers of wild red deer, especially around woodland and scrub, early and late in the day.

Many of the mature hedgerows are laden with berries this year and could be the place to spot winter visitors such as redwings and fieldfares or even waxwings, which have already been seen in Derbyshire this year.

A visit to this area, described by MP Anna Soubry as "the loveliest piece of countryside in my constituency" is both easy and worthwhile for those with an interest in literature, wildlife or just going for a walk or a ride. There must be grave doubts as to how many, if any, would still wish to do so if this opencast mine is allowed to proceed.

Specialist subject is coal

The fact that this, the Shortwood Farm application, involves a smaller area of destruction than the last one did has been of little comfort to those campaigning against it. Many believe that, operating the 'Mastermind principle' (we've started so we'll finish), the mining company would seek to expand the mine to extract all the coal in the area. Much of this lies outside the area of the current proposal but underneath some of the best wildlife habitat.

Many readers will recall that our previous MP, Nick

Palmer, was involved in a long and successful campaign against opencasting at this site. His successor, Anna Soubry, has pledged to continue this fight as well as giving her support for a Private Members' Bill, which would prohibit opencast mining within 500 metres of residential properties.

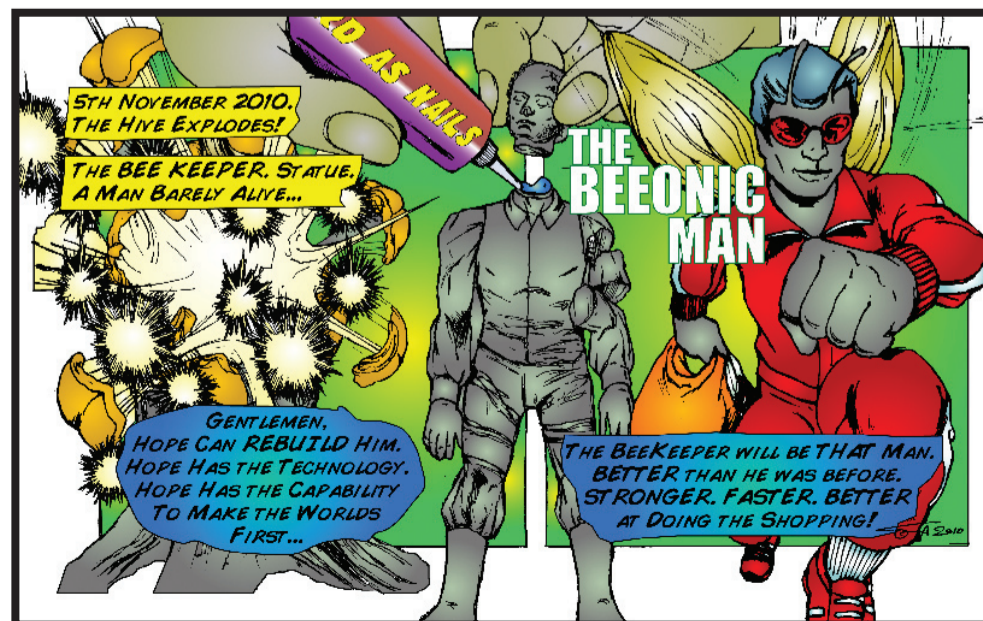
Whilst this could benefit residents and rule out the Cossall site, it would do nothing to help many other places around the country that are threatened with opencast mining, with its attendant loss of wildlife habitats and scarring of the landscape.

Any government that

had a strategy for long-term energy security might decide that the features of opencast coal that make it attractive to companies such as UK Coal – the comparative ease, speed and low cost of its extraction – make it ideal as a resource of last resort, only to be exploited if global instability made it impossible to import enough to meet our energy needs.

Until that day comes, the Cossall site, and many others like it, ought to be saved from ruin at the hands of landowners and mining companies eager to make a quick profit.

Jack Smith
Local ecologist



Thought for the Fortnight

Never test the depth of the water with both feet.