

Leisure

Rugby

New signing for Green & Whites

NOTTINGHAM Rugby have strengthened their pack over the last couple of weeks, with Samoan international Filippo Levi the latest signing.

The 6ft 5in second row, originally from New Zealand, has won 24 caps and has played in the last two World Cups.

Last season he had a spell at Premiership club Newcastle Falcons where he played alongside fellow Kiwi Brent Wilson, who signed for the Green and Whites last week and made his debut in the British

and Irish Cup win over Pontypridd on Sunday.

“Filipo Levi brings further experience and physicality to the squad and will be a great asset to us,” said coach Glenn Delaney. “We have a lot of games in the season and, to be in with a chance when it comes to the play offs and cup knockout, we need more high quality players.

“He fits the bill perfectly, having played in two World Cups, The Premiership, Magners League and Super 12 (now Super 15) for Otago the Highlanders.”

Levi is not expected to join up with his new team mates until later this month and so will not feature in Friday evening's vital Championship fixture against Plymouth Albion at Meadow Lane.

Just six points separate Nottingham and an Albion side currently fourth from bottom of the table.

The Green and Whites will be looking to give themselves breathing space, but to do so they will need to put in an 80 minute performance, something they have struggled to achieve this season.

Rugby

Nottingham Casuals

Nottingham Casuals 24 Bakewell 48

CASUALS were taught what the ‘ions’ mean by Bakewell on Saturday November 12. They are concentration, anticipation, possession and retention, but fortunately not humiliation. Unfortunately Casuals now lie 2nd from bottom in the league, whilst Bakewell are 2nd spot.

Bakewell showed their intent as early as the 5th minute, when their scrum half sneaked through for the first try. By half time, Bakewell managed to keep a 7 point lead.

This is where the retention of the ball and concentration became crucial. Bakewell were first to score in the second half, despite Casuals stealing possession. They followed this up with a run from their own line when Casuals, on the attack, lost possession, and Bakewell were quick to scoop up the ball and add to their tally.

It looked as if Bakewell were going to run away with it, but Casuals forwards, who had put in a huge effort during the game, kept Bakewell deep in their own half. Casuals showed they are capable of playing some good rugby, but they need to cut out the mistakes, and make sure they get their tackles in.

Mellish 2s 7 Nottingham Casuals 62

LAST week's win over Keyworth 1st was a hard fought affair compared with the 62-7 win over Mellish 2s on their own turf.

Blessed with seven subs for the first time this season and a perfectly managed warm-up prepared Casuals for the perfect start. The game plan was executed perfectly; the forwards creating the space, the backs capitalised on the chances.

In times of old, armies bought out their dim witted muscular giant to smash through enemy lines, for

Casuals 2nd XV, Joe Barton stormed around the pitch causing havoc wherever he attacked. Seb Donk was the standout player in the backs. Casuals finished the half seven tries up with only one in return from Mellish.

The backs found gaps in the 2nd half and a number of opportunities emerged, if it wasn't for a couple of ‘forward passes’ more tries may have been found.

There were some lengthy stoppages including one for a concussed Mellish player and another for a Mellish player with a dislocated shoulder who continued after it was ‘popped’ back in. The game belonged to the forwards, though. A solid scrum, consistent line out and a well executed game plan to build the platform for the backs.

The result had a bitter sweet ending for Al Green as he signed off from a six year Casuals career to move to new life in Canada with his wife-to-be, Karen.

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

WINTER wildlife watching has its drawbacks, not least inclement weather, but the main problem is time. The shortening days mean there is simply less time to do it – although some wildlife experiences can only be had in the dark, for the majority of wildlife watching nightfall means ‘game over’. Adding, as happens at this time of year, Christmas shopping to the ‘to do list’ further limits the possibilities for busy would be wildlife watchers. A solution to this might be a trip to Victoria Retail Park in Netherfield. Other retail parks are, of course, available but not many are situated right next to a wildlife hot spot, a visit to which could be combined with shopping duties or, for a lucky few, undertaken while the real enthusiasts explore the stores!

The hot spot in question is the Netherfield Lagoons Local Nature Reserve. These

two lagoons were originally constructed to accept waste slurry from Gedling colliery and, when it closed and they fell into disuse, one had been filled but the other was empty. Their state at the end of their use and their design and construction have meant that when nature moved in and turned them into a wildlife haven they became an arena in which it could be observed. The banks of the lagoons provide access around the entire perimeter of both but keep people at a consistent and, for the wildlife, reassuring distance. The lagoon that was left empty now has a lake at the bottom of it which is surrounded by long steep banks leading to an unusual opportunity to look down, rather than up, to watch birds in the trees and shrubs that have become established.

Unlikely as it may seem, the lagoon once filled with

coal slurry is now the jewel in the reserve's crown. This now contains a shallow lake and an extensive area of reed bed as well as remnants of the slurry that has yet to be reclaimed by nature – a reminder of how it all began. The reserve is worth a visit at any time and not just for the diversity of its bird life, although more than 200 species, including some real rarities, have been recorded in the area. In winter, a particularly good time to do so is in the hours approaching nightfall when you are as good as guaranteed a bird spectacular around this lake and reed bed.

Star billing has to go to the starlings which roost in their thousands in the reed beds allowing a close encounter with their astonishing flocking behaviour – now rightly acknowledged as one of our native wildlife wonders. This is only part of the show. The lake can attract hundreds of gulls, ducks and geese as well as waders on its shoreline, which all come in to roost as night approaches. You can find skeins of geese making a low level approach for landing only a few feet overhead. It may be that they are guided by the lights from the retail park reflected on the water.

This light allows a rare opportunity for night-time

bird watching but is not really sufficient to be able to identify all the birds present. A better way would be to exploit another feature of shortening days – later daybreak. Getting to the roost sites before dawn would allow, as the light levels increase, a much better view of the birds that had been using them. This option might only be for the dedicated enthusiast but by the time the last bird has left for the day

the shops will be open and relatively empty!

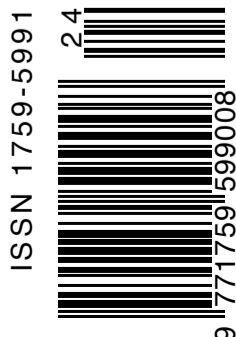
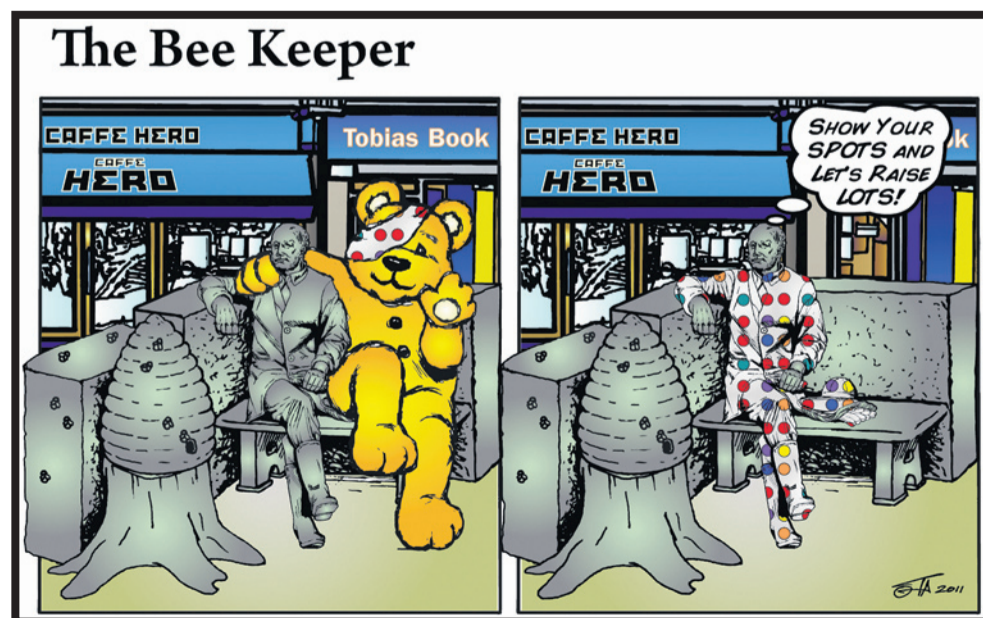
There are alternatives to driving – there is a good bus service to the retail park and both Carlton and Netherfield stations are a short walk away but there are limited access routes to the reserve itself.

The nearest one to the retail park is along the path by the Ouse Dyke off Teal Close, with an alternative from the end of Private Road No 4 via the banks of the Trent.

As a result of this, the reserve is not really on the route to anywhere and this adds to its status as something of a hidden wildlife gem.

It is certainly a great example of how nature can turn an industrial wasteland into a rich wildlife habitat and an ideal place to relieve or even replace Christmas shopping with some Christmas spotting!

Jack Smith
Local ecologist



Thought for the Fortnight

They say that teachers are overworked and underpaid. True. It is exacting and exhausting work, this damming up the flood of human potentialities.

George B Leonard