

## Villages

### Villages in brief

#### Growers keep up standard

PURLEY Horticultural Society staged its spring show at the Memorial Hall, on Saturday, April 6. Prizes were presented by chairman Paul Humphreys, with Graham Chapman scooping the prestigious Springs Farm Cup, for the adult entry which most impressed the judges, after gaining most points overall, while Louis Hodgson won a certificate for his daffodils in the children's class. Organisers said entry numbers were slightly down because of difficult weather conditions but standards were as high as ever.

#### All that jazz for punters

THE Magpie and Parrot pub in Shinfield is staging a jazz night on Thursday, May 2. Jazz guitarist Mike Miller, double bassist Keith Howard and drummer Jim Wade will be performing jazz classics, Latin numbers and cool ballads at the pub in School Green. The music starts at 8pm and entry costs £5, including refreshments. For more information, call 0118 988 4130.

#### Weaving the way to success

CHRISTINE Brewster, who runs weekly Willow Wednesdays weaving classes at her Old Stables Loft studio in Englefield, is on the shortlist for a prize in the annual Craft Skills Awards which will be presented at a London ceremony on Thursday, May 2, hosted by television presenter Kirstie Allsopp. She is up for the Encouraging Craft Skills in Informal Settings category.

#### Early birds to catch chorus

JOIN the Wokingham and Bracknell branch of the RSPB for an early morning stroll on International Dawn Chorus Day. The walk will take place at Dinton Pastures Country Park on Sunday, May 5. Ramblers will meet in the main car park at 5am and taking part costs £1.

#### Comedy takes the stage

THE Twyford and Ruscombe Theatre Group is staging a performance of Port Out, Starboard Home at Loddon Hall in Twyford, from Thursday-Saturday, May 16-18. Tickets for the comedy, penned by Richard James, cost £9 for adults with £7 concessions. To book, call 0118 328 2825.

#### Insight into Old Testament

A TALK on the background to the Old Testament will take place at St James The Less church, in Pangbourne, on Thursday, May 9. The talk will be given by the Reverend Tony Naden, and takes place from 8-9.30pm. All are welcome and entry is free.

Send your Villages news to [ngutteridge@berksmedia.co.uk](mailto:ngutteridge@berksmedia.co.uk)

## Lose your marbles at Basildon Park's giant ball run



**On the ball:** Head gardener Tim Martin starts work on the Great Ball Run at Basildon Park.

BASILDON Park has set the ball rolling for the summer by turning an idea from a children's toy into a new attraction.

The Great Ball Run consists of six giant networks crafted from organic or re-claimed materials and modelled by head gardener Tim Martin on a marble run belonging to his children.

He said: "The kids have always enjoyed playing with the run, and I began to think about how we could develop the idea, making large helter-skelters, and creating a new interest for visitors this season."

The park at Lower Basildon is open from Saturday, May 4, to September 30, 10am-5pm each day when visitors will be able to buy a trail pack for £3, including their own Basildon Park Ball, and tick off another item on the National Trust's '50 things to do before you're 11½' list.

It took Tim, a team of 10 volunteers, apprentice Connor Morling and the maintenance crew eight weeks to design, gather the materials and build the runs, using fallen wood and brush, disused RSJ and old drain pipes and even tubing used to roll carpets for

storage when Pride and Prejudice was filmed there in 2005.

Tim said: "Anything and everything that could be recycled has been. Even some old, worn balustrades that were replaced as part of 2010's stonework project have been incorporated, and Kim Creswell, renowned willow sculptor, has worked with us to create a ball run structure."

All the usual attractions in the house and gardens will be open for the new season. Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/basildon-park](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/basildon-park) or follow on Twitter@BasildonParkNT

## Sheeplands 'threatened' by plan row

by Nick Outteridge

[ngutteridge@berksmedia.co.uk](mailto:ngutteridge@berksmedia.co.uk)

MORE than 100 jobs are at risk at a popular garden centre mired in a decade-long planning dispute, with its owner accusing councillors of "trying to drive us out of business".

Rob Scott, who owns Hare Hatch Sheeplands in Twyford, has "virtually given up hope" of negotiating an agreement with Wokingham Borough Council after officers suspended negotiations over the long-running dispute.

But the council says it was forced to take action after the centre, which has special dispensation to trade on green belt land, converted 10,000 square metres of disused greenhouses into retail space, claiming it was illegal. The row will come to a head at a public planning appeal hearing on Tuesday, May 14. The venue and time has not yet been set.

Mr Scott said: "If we lose the appeal next month Sheeplands will no longer be viable as a business and we will be forced to close. That means 102 people will be out of work and customers from throughout the area will have fewer shop-

ping options. It appears that they are trying to drive us out of business and we just don't know why." The council has highlighted 15 alleged breaches of planning permission and last October issued the garden centre with an 18 month ultimatum. But Mr Scott says his team has offered to demolish some of the offending buildings and work with the council towards a solution.

He said: "This reaction comes as a bitter disappointment to us because for a long while we believed the council were truly committed to finding a constructive solution. It's almost as if the council has been trying to grind us into submission."

But Cllr Keith Baker accused Sheeplands of appealing against the enforcement order a year early instead of working with councillors. He said: "It's almost become a mini supermarket and I have Mr Scott on record saying he sees the likes of Waitrose as his main competitors, which is not what green belt land is for."

Sheeplands has now provided evidence for its claim that it must expand to survive, and officers are poring through the paperwork.



**Celebrating:** Lord and Lady Iliffe with their daughter, Florence Klipping, at the opening of the new, expanded site at Yattendon for Harriet House Montessori School and left, Cecily Lewis models the new uniform.

## School's new site

PUPILS at a West Berkshire primary school will have more space to learn and play after it moved to a larger site.

Harriet House Montessori School had been based in Ashampstead since opening in 2003, before officially unveiling its new premises at The Walled Garden, in neighbouring Yattendon, on Monday, April 15. In glorious sunshine, pupils and parents explored the new buildings and grounds before they were officially opened by Lord Iliffe, chairman of the Yattendon Estate within which the new school is situated.

The school, just three miles away from its previous home, sits within a five-acre walled

garden, which formerly made up part of the grounds of Friarham House School.

The children will now have more room to play and enjoy larger sports fields, while the added space means the school is set to open a reception class for the first time in September.

Headteacher Harriet Hathaway said: "We believe that learning is an adventure and children should learn in the way most suited to them.

"Children should be allowed to discover their environment in their own individual way. Wherever their interests lie, be it in the classroom, sports, arts or music, we can offer it all in our new location."

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