

Spring 2022

# Compton Bassett Matters

Edited by Councillors Barlow and Waite for Compton Bassett Parish Council

## Hills refuse to accept sand quarry planning conditions

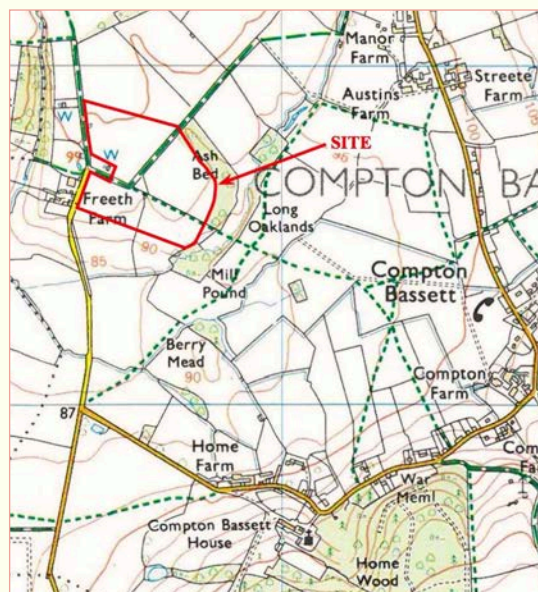
Following the decision by the Wiltshire Council Planning Committee to impose planning conditions upon Hills Quarry Products, which concerned the proposed sand extraction quarry just under one mile from the centre of Compton Bassett, they have decided to appeal the ruling to the Secretary of State for the Environment. This is disappointing since they have had nearly a year to review the planning committee ruling and have only now decided to appeal, shortly before the time limit on any appeal was due to expire.

It is impossible to guess how their remonstrations will be received; however, we would expect that the current planning conditions are sufficiently reasonable for them to be upheld by the Secretary of State because they provide equitable environmental protection for local residents. We can only speculate that the length of time it has taken for Hills to lodge the appeal is linked to their need to ensure they have a strong commercial position, and with the imposed planning restrictions this might not have been the case, which may have motivated their action at this late juncture.

In terms of process it will be some months before a review of their objections, and it is not the role of the government to assist in improving the commercial viability of any given scheme which is appealed. We cannot see that the imposed 70 metres distance the quarry is now forced to operate from dwellings near to the quarry is at all unreasonable; in fact, double this distance is closer to current standards. Moreover, the enforced continual noise and dust monitoring are acknowledged as best practice. We trust that Wiltshire Council in their own representation to the Secretary of State will point out the carcinogenic nature of the ultra-fine sand that is required to be extracted, and that when stipulating planning conditions there is clearly a very significant health issue which outweighs any financial consideration impacting Hills Quarry products.

Compton Bassett Parish Council has enlisted the help of our local council representative Ashley O'Neill to ensure the Dept for the Environment is fully informed, and we have also consulted our MP James Gray to ensure our concerns are communicated to the Secretary of State.

Laurie Waite





# New Speed Indicator Device



A new speed indicator device (SID) has now been installed in Compton Bassett as part of the ongoing speed management initiative. The SID will register any vehicles exceeding 27 mph and flash a warning that they are entering a 30 mph area of the village. In addition to controlling traffic, the SID is also equipped with metrics which allow it to count vehicles, and record their speed with time and date. Even if the device is in "covert" mode, with the display switched off, it still records the data. This will be interesting for comparing the difference in results between 'On' and 'Off' settings.

The SID records will be very important for our ongoing discussions with Wiltshire Highways who have instigated an external traffic review of the village, to be carried out within the next few weeks. This will help

determine if our request, which has Wiltshire's tacit agreement, will go ahead for an extension to the 30 and 40 mph zones for traffic approaching and entering the village.



*Come up and see me, make me smile. (Apologies to Steve Harley)*

## Defibrillator Training

Following incidents involving the village defibrillator, it has been suggested that the Parish Council initiate training sessions to facilitate better knowledge of how and when to use the device should an emergency arise.

Whether we organise training is dependent upon demand from the community and their willingness to support the training which requires 25 participants. So, if you would like to take part in a hands-on training session at the Benson Village Hall for a nominal cost, please contact [parishclerk@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk) and stake your claim for a place.

## Parish Steward

The once-a-month visits by the Parish Steward enables us to carry out small maintenance work and repairs to the highway, verges and ditches. Potholes have to be actually on the highway, rather than an overrun for them to be included.

If you spot something that requires attention please ring Peter Barnett on 812274 and he will add it to the list.

## Stay Safe Online!



## THE WILTSHIRE BOBBY VAN TRUST

The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust is offering a free Stay Safe Online Drop-in session at the Village Hall. The last one was postponed due to Covid but they are up and running again.

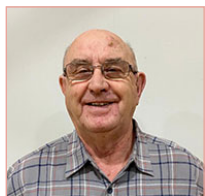
Sponsored by Tesco, it's a two hour workshop for those over 60, or 18+ with a registered disability, to come along and learn basic practical skills, get cyber and scam prevention advice, and ask questions. Refreshments are included.

Please let the parish clerk know if you would like to take part. Contact [parishclerk@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk)

# Parish Council Annual General Meeting

**Held on Wednesday 11 May 2022**

The election of Chair and Vice-Chair took place with a unanimous vote for Pete Szczesiak and Charles Reis returned to their respective roles.



Chairman Pete Szczesiak gave his annual report for the year May 2021–May 2022, this being the duty of the outgoing chair to outline the activities of the parish council for the preceding year.

We had around a dozen planning applications in the last year mostly for trees or hedging etc, we also attended a Wiltshire Council Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July last year, objecting to planning conditions for sand extraction at Freeth Farm. We asked for the conveyor to be enclosed and the bund moved further away from the residents' properties, and it was requested at the meeting that continuous dust and noise monitoring schemes should be in place. These conditions have now been sent to Hills nine months after that meeting. Hills has responded by appealing the conditions to the Secretary of State for Environment.

We welcomed a new councillor when Hailei Spencer was co-opted on to the Parish Council; Hailei has taken on the responsibility of Health and Welfare for the parish which includes looking after the defibrillator which is now attached to the phone box. We also welcomed our new county councillor Ashley O'Neill.

We put a request to the Calne Area Transport Group for the speed restriction signs to be moved further out in the village. This was approved by the Area Board. We are awaiting an assessment to be carried out by Wiltshire Council. If successful, we will have speed restrictions covering the whole village.

The Parish Council has purchased a speed indicator device which is in operation, situated on the 30mph sign near the village hall.

In August, a Lockdown break-out party was organised by Julian Barlow and Laurie Waite. It was a great success in bringing the village together. Many thanks to you both.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the councillors for their continued and sometimes thankless hard work for the Parish of Compton Bassett. Also, a big thank you to our clerk, Diane for her support and dedication this year.

**Cllr Pete Szczesiak Chair, Compton Bassett Parish Council - 11 May 2022**

## Parish Boundary Changes

As we outlined in *Compton Bassett Matters* Winter 2021, the creation of a new parish for Derry Hill & Studley means that Calne Without parish is due to be split up with the residual parts being assigned to surrounding districts.

It's likely that Compton Bassett parish will grow as a result, through the addition of land from the existing west boundary at Freeth towards Calne, for instance the High Penn area. But the final decision has not yet been made and implementation will not happen until 2025. We hope to be able to publish a detailed map showing the exact changes in the next newsletter.

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## Village Speed Zones – Slow Progress

We had hoped to have been given the thumbs-up by the independent traffic consultant who was commissioned by Wiltshire Council to ratify their view of recommending our proposals for better speed zones in the village. By that we mean an extended 30mph zone and the 40mph to be taken out to the parish boundary near Breach Farm.

It's another step in our campaign to ameliorate the negative effects of the village road being used increasingly by commuter traffic, with all the problems that this has generated.

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## Bench for the Bus Shelter

The bench which used to be near the playground has been cleaned up and moved to a new position in front of the bus shelter, where we think it looks better and enhances the improvements already made to the corner of Briar Leaze/village road.





# Hills respond to Parish Council after their recent landfill fires



We re-reprint the letter received from Hills Waste Management regarding the recent fire at Lower Compton site. We feel that the response seeks to minimise what was an incident of sufficient gravity to require the attendance of 6 fire tenders and numerous emergency service personnel.

Key areas which we would seek to challenge include:

- An assertion by Hills that it is of no benefit to them that a serious fire occurred on their premises. This is self-evident and we at no time suggested it was an act of self-sabotage.
- They play down the fact that they have had 3 fires in 4 years (not 5, as they state) and mitigate the impact by saying these were not classified as serious. We would question this definition of “serious”. If residents are required to stay indoors, shut all windows and avoid breathing in air we would deem this as being of significance.
- Hills Waste Management argue that the wind was not blowing in the direction of the village so we were unaffected. This misses the point that the wind could have changed direction at any time and despite their best efforts controlling the elements is surely even beyond the management capability of Hills. Ensuring adequate control of their unit is, however, within their purview.
- Tyres which caught fire and produced vile noxious fumes are described in a dismissive tone as “baled tyres”. This does not make them any less of a pollutant and the letter makes no mention of the potential ecological damage fire/fumes and smoke may have made to the area.
- We shall never know about the long term damage this serious incident has had on the locale as the letter informs us that, rather than carry out an air quality monitoring, the environment agency did not have enough time to set up their equipment. Hence they felt their role of protecting the local taxpayer from the fire, which is described by Hills themselves as significant with the site impacted for two days, was unwarranted.

Julian Barlow

**R.E. – Landfill Fire at Lower Compton 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**

Thank you for your letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> April highlighting your concerns after the fire at our landfill site on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Please be assured that we have also taken this event very seriously and regret any impact to the local community it undoubtedly had. It also had a significant disruption on the landfill site and to the service that the site provides to businesses in the area.

Incidents such as these inevitably mean that the site is closed for some time and that additional resources are required to manage the incident as well as remedial works afterwards. Please be reassured that there is no benefit to us as an operator for these incidents to occur, they are costly and challenging and we work hard to limit them and to ensure that if and when they do occur, they are dealt with professionally and speedily.

In your letter you state that this was one of several incidents in recent years. Including this incident, there have been 3 occasions that the Fire and Rescue Service have had to attend the landfill within the last 5 years. The latest incident was more significant and involved the site being closed for waste acceptance for 2 days. The previous two incidents were short lived and did not involve the site having to close. All three incidents were not described as 'major incidents' by either the Fire and Rescue Service or the Environment Agency, and whilst these events are extremely serious, they are infrequent.

During an incident like this, the advice to residents from the Fire and Rescue Service is to close the windows and stay indoors. In this instance winds were light and North- Easterly which meant the smoke plume generally rose upwards and then travelled towards Calne. Compton Bassett was unaffected by this incident because it is situated North-East of the site.

Lower Compton Landfill is a fully permitted and highly regulated facility with various policies and procedures in place to ensure that we operate to the highest health and safety and environmental standards. All waste streams accepted into the site are subject to waste acceptance procedures, however it is simply not possible to ensure that every load of waste delivered does not contain waste which has the potential to affect the operation of the site.

The company also employs emergency response procedures which were implemented during this event, allowing us to aid the Fire and Rescue Service in putting the fire out in as timely a period as was possible. Both the Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency have commented positively on how Hills was very effective in controlling this incident in the way we did.

With respect to the details of this incident, it is the case that within this particular landfill operational cell a total of 40,000 tonnes of waste has been accepted since the cell opened in January 2022. However, I would like to confirm that as we stated in our press releases and communication to the liaison committee at the time, the vast majority of this waste was unaffected by the fire. Unfortunately, due to the fact this was a relatively new landfill cell the engineered drainage layer, which is installed above the clay liner and consists of baled tyres, was still exposed and this caught fire and was the principal material alight during the incident rather than waste. Once alight tyres are extremely difficult to put out and it needed the relocation of a significant amount of soil type material to eventually smother the fire which was completed by site staff by 20:30 on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

The 40,000t of waste within the cell consists of several different types of non- hazardous, commercial, industrial and municipal waste streams which does include a small amount of low-grade clinical waste such as nappies. All these waste streams are permitted to be accepted at the site and as mentioned above these wastes were not what was principally on fire. With respect to tyres, these are part of the engineered containment system rather than waste accepted at the site and are approved by the Environment Agency as part of the Construction Quality Assurance conditions within the Environmental Permit.

We will conduct our own internal investigation into the fire and will review our procedures as part of that review. Any investigations carried out by the Fire and Rescue Service, or the Environment Agency, will be made available to the public by those organisations, but unfortunately it is unlikely that the exact cause of the fire will ever be known.

The Environment Agency are able to carry out air quality monitoring but I understand in this instance, due to the speed with which we were able to control and extinguish the fire, they felt by the time they had set up the equipment there would be very little benefit in carrying out such monitoring. It is our view that as long as people downwind of the facility followed the advice given by the Fire and Rescue Service there would be very little, if any, risk to the local community.



*Lower Compton landfill fire. Wiltshire Live.*

Hills letter, *left*, came in reply to Compton Bassett Parish Council's many questions to them regarding the fire and its cause, which it seems will never be known.

**This is now the third fire at Lower Compton landfill site in the last four years, which represents something of a worrying springtime trend:**

- 19th April 2018
- 25th May 2020
- 27th April 2022

The latest fire had apparently been burning throughout the night and it raises the question: why are there are no precautionary measures or detection equipment for such occurrences?



*Where am I? Give that man a map!*





## Bonfire Beacon

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Compton Bassett kick off on **Thursday 2nd June** with a bonfire beacon on **Starve Knoll**. Over 1,500 beacons will be lit throughout the country.

The beacon will be lit at precisely 9.15pm, so please allow plenty of time to make your way up to the top. Parking is available for the less mobile to drive up Blacksmith's Lane, through the gates, which will be left open, and on to the side of the knoll.



*4th June 2012 - The last jubilee beacon light.*



*Don't forget to bring a torch!*

## Village Hall Goes Digital!

The Benson Village Hall is a wonderful resource for the village and we are so fortunate to have such a large hall, considering the population of the parish. The hall essentially belongs to everyone who lives in Compton Bassett; it has charitable status and is managed by seven trustees, who are dedicated villagers tasked with the responsibility of looking after the hall and seeing that it remains fit for purpose into the future. All the trustees give their time freely, two of whom are parish councillors. The parish council is keen to forge closer links with the hall, for the good of all.

The village hall committee is in the process of upgrading facilities, addressing issues that will help make the hall more attractive to hirers. These include overhead projection equipment for presentations and a permanent electrical installation for the benefit of outside connections.

The big news is that Wi-Fi is now freely available for hall users. Superfast Fibre Broadband was installed at the beginning of May and means that internet connectivity will benefit a wide variety of people and businesses. It will also enable the hall to accept cashless payments for occasions where this is worthwhile.

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## Patching the Potholes

The most common complaint we receive, running a close second to traffic management, is pot holes. Every village, town and city in the county places demands on Wiltshire Highways to fill in the ever-growing holes in our roads.

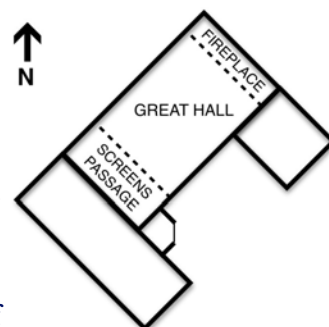
After a great deal of lobbying, we were pleased to see the workmen out in Compton Bassett earlier last week. It is not as good as road resurfacing and it is only a tarmac Elastoplast, but any work to improve our roads is appreciated.



# The Old Compton Bassett House

By 1228, an estate known as *Cumptone Basset* was held by Alan Basset; he and his family are thought to have occupied a house with a church close to it. The Bassets were a prominent and successful family in their service to the king; Alan served as royal advisor to Kings Richard I, John and Henry III.

The manor changed hands at intervals during the 14th to 16th centuries (Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth wife once held it) until Sir John Mervyn was granted it in 1553, when details of the manor house were first given about a timbered framed building which was said to have taken 260 oaks to repair. The same house, or its replacement in 1659, was laid out in 'U' plan with its main entrance through the courtyard, which was open to the south-east. The principal range of the house lay north-east to south-west. A hall occupied the north-east side while at the south-west end there was a screens passage with an entrance at its western corner from the courtyard. The brief description given in 1659 does suggest that at least some of the older Tudor house could still have been in place.



*Possible pre-1663 layout of the house from records.*

In 1663 Compton Bassett manor was sold to Sir John Weld for £5,000 and over the next nine years he spent £10,000 converting the 'U' shaped house, building over the courtyard to make a large rectangular house, 40m x 33m with projecting corner towers. The stable block was also built during this time, 1665–70, later converted to accommodation in 1936, and is all we can see now.



*1915. Rear facade facing south-east over the large croquet lawn.*

By 1706, 29 acres of parkland surrounded the house and 25 acres of woodland on the east side. John Walker of Lyneham, who inherited Compton Cumberwell manor from brother Heneage Walker, then bought part of Compton Bassett estate in 1758. His son obtained the rest in 1768 and proceeded to add the kitchen gardens and more parkland. John Jnr took on the additional Heneage to save the family name and had the north-west facade of the house renewed in brick by 1814. The park and woodland extended to 200 acres by 1840, three lodges had been built and the rest of the house encased in brick. It now consisted of a hall, six reception rooms, two picture galleries, 37 bed & dressing rooms, and offices.

When the Great Depression of British Agriculture beset Britain in the 1880s, large landowners found it difficult to generate sufficient income for the upkeep of the house, death duties and general estate commitments. After inheriting in 1901, Godfrey Walker-Heneage married the following year and moved to his wife's inherited estate at Coker Court in Somerset. He rented out the house in Compton Bassett for sixteen years before selling to the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1918, when death duties were about to be doubled. The 4,758 acres of Cherhill and Compton Bassett villages made £108,000 (around £6 million today). The Co-op resold it all 11 years later and Captain Guy and Lady Benson bought the house and 777 acres for £23,000. Compton House had now suffered through years of neglect, and initially it was planned to take it down and build a new house further south in the park, overlooking Cherhill.



*The drawing room, 1917*



*1935: A sad end. Workmen start demolition work on the roof and much window glass is smashed.*

They abandoned this idea and demolished the old house in 1935 and instead converted the stable block to accommodation the following year, while they rented Avebury Manor. The persistent myth that the old house burnt down probably derives from the disposal of timber which was removed from the house during demolition with the intention for re-use but was found to be riddled with worm, so it was all burnt up on site.

© Compton Bassett History Archive



# Yatesbury Airfield Housing Plans



A proposal has been submitted for 43 houses at the Yatesbury old airfield site which has a number of historic buildings. The site has Conservation Area status but there seems very little conservation of the heritage within the development plans. The existing buildings are to be carved up and altered for housing which would probably double the size of the existing population of Yatesbury, without the benefit of any community amenities being offered, other than garden benches and the like. We think it is inappropriate in size and character for the area and will smother the existing heritage and open space, which should be protected.

There is no affordable housing in the scheme - the new units (36) are all 3, 4 & 5 bed detached. These all have individual gardens, which again, will affect the common space character of the area. We could find but one mention about light pollution on the surrounding environment which will inevitably be affected adversely because of its wide-open aspect, and very vulnerable in an area that is well known for its dark skies with the AONB of North Wiltshire Downs.

Beyond basic tree planting and surface water management, our reaction is that the scheme

pays lip-service to wildlife and biodiversity. There is sufficient space to do something positive but this has been ignored.

We appreciate that the site is slowly decaying but we are afraid that this development comes across as an attempt for maximum financial return. We also queried the fact that there has been no Section 106 consideration.

## Traffic Mirrors Policy

Compton Bassett Parish Council do not believe it appropriate to have traffic mirrors in a conservation area, they are unsightly and distracting. The Parish Council strongly advise against traffic mirrors and would object to any applications for traffic mirrors. Neither is it the practice of Wiltshire Council to authorise the use of mirrors as their road safety benefits are very much in doubt.

Experience shows that mirrors on public highways can increase safety risks, which include:

- reflected light and interference with a driver's vision
- reduced ability to judge an oncoming vehicle's speed
- creating an unreasonable dependence on the mirror
- if dirty, the mirror may distort or restrict the view
- mirrors may be a target for vandals.

Drivers involved in accidents often seek to apportion blame and the erection of a mirror on the highway could result in claims against the Highway Authority. Other solutions may be available, for example cutting back vegetation or realigning boundary fences.

**Cllr Pete Szczesiak**

**Chair - Compton Bassett Parish Council**

**April 2022**

**Always contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance please.**

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<b>Pete Szczesiak</b>	<b>chairman@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk</b>	<b>Chair, Calne Area Parish Forum, CATG &amp; Calne Area Board, Hills Liaison Committee, Legal Duties, Neighbourhood &amp; Farm Watch</b>
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