

COMPTON BASSETT MATTERS

Spring
2023

EDITORIAL BY
COUNCILLORS
BARLOW AND WAITE

Secretary of State backs Village against Hills Quarry Appeal



An appeal by Hills Quarry Products Ltd into planning conditions stipulated by Wiltshire Council and supported by Compton Bassett Parish Council (CBPC), has been rejected on all counts by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Planning permission was originally granted in the 1950s for the sand quarry and this remained in place. However, after lobbying from interested residents and Compton Bassett Parish Council, the planning committee for Wiltshire Council imposed reasonable and proportionate safeguards for local residents to try and mitigate against impact from noise, pollution, dust contamination and positioning of the quarry so near to local houses.

Hills Quarry Products appealed over the heads of Wiltshire Council Strategic Planning Committee to the Department for the Environment, not wishing to be impacted by any of the safeguards imposed by the council, arguing that these restrictions would impact the commercial viability of the project.

However, the planning inspector representing the Secretary of State found against Hills on virtually all their complaints, deciding that:

- **Ongoing Dust Monitoring should be maintained – not temporary and sporadic as Hills argued**
- **Continuous Noise Recording should be imposed – not occasional and ill-defined as Hills wanted**
- **A covered conveyor should be used – not an open and cheaper solution suggested by Hills**
- **Most importantly, the establishment of a 70 metre distance between the quarry and local residents' dwellings. Hills had only wanted a 35 metre distance allowing them to quarry closer to a suggested sand deposit.**

Continued on page 2...

Hills Quarry Appeal Rejected, *continued...*



The conveyor will run all the way from the site into Lower Compton landfill area, crossing over Freeth Lane and the bridleway at Freeth Corner at height. Planning conditions have specified that it will now have to be covered.

Finally, Hills asked for all their costs of the appeal to be granted, speculated to be running into over £100,000 of legal fees alone, but they were awarded none.

A spokesperson for CBPC said, “Ideally we wanted the blight of this unnecessary and unwanted quarry to be rejected all together but due to planning permission granted in the 1950s we could not achieve this. However, there is now legally enforceable onerous and substantive restrictions placed on Hills Quarry Products and they will need to consider the economic viability of the project going forward. Should they wish to go ahead we will continue to fight on behalf of those affected in this area of outstanding natural beauty.”

The rejection of the Hills appeal also means the company will have to re-submit their working plans with a 70m buffer zone together with detailed continuous dust/noise monitoring proposals for approval by the Minerals Planning Authority. It is also now reported that Hills Quarry Products have to complete a preliminary archaeological assessment and the view from experts is that these assessments may well confirm that Freeth Farm is the location of one of the most important Saxon villages established on what was the Wessex-Mercia boundary. Observers have further suggested that the subsequent excavations may be of national importance and take a further 1 to 2 years to complete at a sum exceeding £1m which would be met by the developer, Hills Quarry Products.

Julian Barlow

Read more about the probable deserted Saxon village at Freeth quarry site on page 6.

Coronation Cream Tea!

Monday 8th May 2-5pm

The Parish Council and Benson Village Hall are joining forces to support and organise a special cream tea at the end of the Coronation long weekend of festivities, on Monday 8th May.

There'll be free cream teas for all villagers on offer and a licensed bar will be open, in case you fancy a nice glass of bubbly to wash it all down in majestic fashion.

Now, is it cream or jam that goes on your scone first?



Emergency Safety Alert Test

The government is set to test a new safety alert system, which will enable people to be contacted via their mobile phone when lives are in danger. Details are in the panel below.

It will only be used in emergencies, such as risk of flooding and will not be able to track your location or collect personal data.

You'll hear a siren-like sound and a message will be displayed on your screen.

Village Playground Gets New Play Equipment

Whilst the Village Hall and children's playground facilities do not fall under the remit or responsibility of the Parish Council, we do very much regard the Village Hall committee as a sister organisation and two Parish Councillors, Peter Barnet and Laurie Waite sit on the Trustees panel which manage the facilities. In connection with that role we are pleased to report the installation of new playground equipment for children in the village with a huge effort by local residents to install over £12,000 of new playground equipment which was funded by a grant award achieved by Jane Marshall, Chair of the Village Hall committee. Not all residents in and around the new play park were comfortable with the sighting of one of the play units. However, following a great deal of local consultation, the new equipment has been successfully installed after a sterling effort by the local community and now children wishing to use the log walks, wavy bars and other facilities, will be able to enjoy summer fun in the park.



Many thanks to the magnificent team of eight diggers: Clive, Sam, Laurie, Ed, Dave, Max, Alex and John.

Parish Steward Schedule

Our next visits from Wiltshire Council's Parish Steward are on the following dates:

Thursday 8 May

Thursday 29 June

Thursday 20 July



Verges - Ditches - Culverts - Manholes - Potholes
Please ring Peter Barnett on 01249 812274

UK's Leading Bee Expert Gives Free Talk at CB AGM

Village Hall - Wednesday 17 May 7pm

You are all welcome to join the Parish Council at its Annual Community meeting on 17th May. As well as a chance to air your views on local matters to Parish Councillors there will be free drinks and nibbles and a lecture by one of the leading Bee Keepers in the UK – Richard Rickets – Editor of the national BeeCraft Magazine.

Richard lives in Corsham and, as well as writing about bees, looks after the apiary at Westonbirt Arboretum and has interviewed the Master Bee-Keeper at Buckingham Palace. He has some interesting insights to share on bees in Wiltshire, their impact on farming, flora and fauna.



Help mobility scooter and pushchair users!



We may not be blessed with continuous pavements through the village but nevertheless, it's a real shame to limit their use by hedges encroaching. Some pavement widths have been reduced to barely 500mm, which is not enough for those who would like to use them safely. Please check your front hedge if it abuts a pavement and see if it can be improved. Thanks!

Compton Bassett villagers rally for annual litter pick



On Sunday morning 5th March, an amazing 22 village volunteers assembled to deal with the depressing amount of roadside rubbish, most of which is thrown out of passing vehicles. This year we filled up an alarming 18 refuse bags with cans and bottles. One section of road is clearly a popular dump for vodka drinkers, with over 40 bottles (a fairly even split between straight Vodka and Vodka & Cranberry) all dumped on the same side of the road. It was a similar story last year; could it be repeat offending by just one person? A horrifying thought.

Thank you so much to all who turned up and spared an hour or so to refresh the verges.

Local Rights of Way Update

A proposed change to a footpath around Upper Lodge and Park Farm is underway, on the Cherhill/Compton Bassett border. There's no loss of a right of way involved but the direction of the track will be tweaked. In our parish, walkers will probably not notice any change, as the changes formalise what has happened in recent years on the ground. We'll be checking the signage soon.

As soon as there is confirmation and a revised Rights of Way local map issued, we will make this available.

Fly-Tipping a growing blight

Compton Bassett has not escaped the blight of fly tipping with more and more rubbish from tyres to sofas being dumped around the village in recent weeks. Even before Covid-19, it was a major problem for UK councils. Large-scale fly-tipping – defined as the dumping of a lorry load of rubbish – more than doubled in England between 2012 and 2019. English councils spent £12.8m in 2021 alone clearing up more than 36,200 large tips.

It is believed that organised crime may be behind the surge, with criminals posing as legitimate waste-disposal businesses only to dump the rubbish they collect on private land or public roads. But Covid-19 turbocharged the problem. Apparently, fly-tipping increased by 300% since the start of lockdown. It was a perfect storm of people being furloughed, finally getting around to doing DIY jobs they'd been putting off and then finding that recycling centres were closed. When the tips opened, many people could simply not be bothered to travel to official dumps during opening hours and left their waste on surrounding roads. It is probably no coincidence that piles of tyres have started appearing on the road outside our village on the way to Lower Compton Recycling Centre.

In an effort to combat the problem, the Parish Council is working with Wiltshire Council to investigate the cost of installing monitoring in key hot spots. Please report any examples of fly-tipping to us with details of where and when you spotted the rubbish and any photographic evidence you can provide would be helpful.

parishclerk@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk



So tired... The latest offerings, piled up for collection by the Calne Clean Up Crew, local arm of Cleanup UK.

The Waiting Game...30 40 60

The most common complaint that CBPC receives from parishioners is regarding the speed and volume of traffic through the village.

It is sadly not within the remit of the Parish Council to impose speed limits, restrictions or inhibitors to help control cars. We have however, installed a Speed Indicator Device (SID), and the latest statistics are covered elsewhere in *Compton Bassett Matters*.

Nevertheless the SID, whilst helpful, is not the answer to the issue. For some years, we have asked Wiltshire Council to impose new 30mph restrictions in the village and 40mph restrictions on the approach roads, which are currently 60mph and we believe, dangerous.

An outside consultant, Atkins, was employed by Wiltshire Council to carry out an independent assessment of speed and volume of traffic and unhelpfully, its findings did not support our desire to change speed limits. We protested against this flawed outcome at the newly formed Local Highway and Footway Improvement Groups (LHFIG) – which replaced the previously named Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs). There are 18 new LHFIGs - one for each community area in Wiltshire made up of local Wiltshire Council members, town and parish council representatives, and stakeholders from the local community. They are tasked with identifying small-scale local highways projects in their area to improve safety and encourage walking and cycling. The key difference between the new LHFIGs and the former CATGs is that the new groups are able to improve or repair existing infrastructure such as highways and footways, while still investing in new infrastructure, as the previous CATGs could not.

After our protest at the Atkins report findings, LHFIG overruled the recommendations and supported our desire to extend the 30mph stretch through the village but deferred a decision on the 40mph. Local Highway engineers are also supportive of the 40mph which is helpful. A decision was due at the start of the year but was deferred until after Easter. It seems wiser for us to batch both decisions together as, if we are successful with changes to the speed restrictions, we will need to pay for new signage.

At this stage we are playing the waiting game and should we be successful we will have new slower speed limits, new signage and greater enforcement. It will not stop the volume of cars travelling through Compton Bassett but it will hopefully make the village safer.

Village History Archive



Pea-picking at Sands Farm 1926, now in Hills' landfill site.

Photographs collected by the late Reg Rumming, of family groups and village scenes going back into the 19th century, has formed the basis for an archive of photographic history of Compton Bassett. From this beginning, John Reis took on the role of curator and catalogued the collection, adding important facts of information. As well as this, research was conducted into the village's past, in both archaeological survey and documentary investigation, during the 1980s to 2000s period.

In the past eight or so years, the now considerable assemblage has been further extended by Laurie Waite and the whole mass of material is being constructed into a website which everyone can enjoy. It will take some time for all the data to be put in place but in the near future, we hope to have a large chunk of it ready for viewing. From then on, the Parish Council will be responsible maintaining the website.

Speed Indicator Device - SID

The first 3 months of 2023 has seen an unwelcome increase in the number of vehicles speeding into the 30mph zone near the Village Hall. It's not a dramatic rise but it reminds us that this part of the village badly needs the proposed extension of the 30mph out to 57 CB, Dove Cottage (see Waiting Game article to the left of this page). We can then hope to persuade drivers to slow down earlier.

Two drivers, coming in from the Hilmarton end, were recorded approaching the Village Hall at nearly 70mph, one at 8am and the other at 6pm.

The second location for SID is next to Buttle Farm and it was installed there for October and November last year. While the highest speeds were recorded at almost 50mph, the average speed of vehicles was 28.7mph. We will be transferring SID back there soon to carry out a further assessment.

Abandoned Saxon Village and Watermill

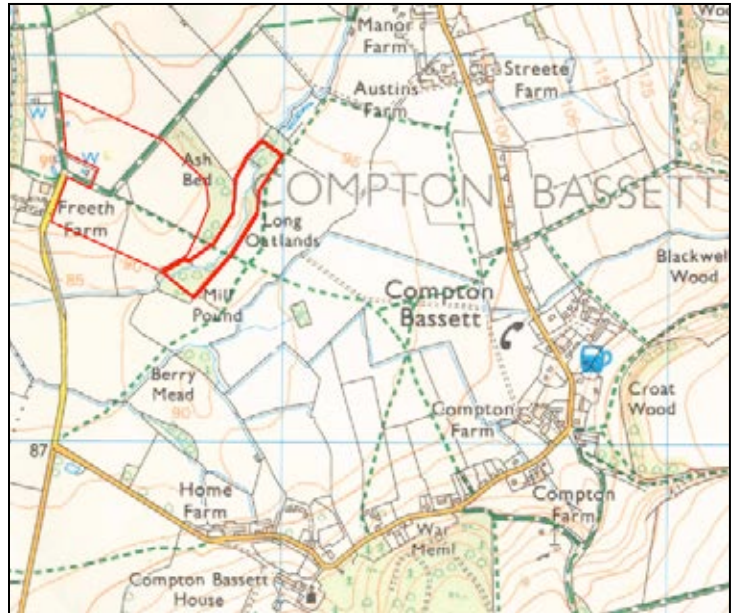
The possibility of a Saxon settlement near Freeth Farm in Compton Bassett has been known about for a few years now, ever since a geophysical survey was carried out to evaluate the proposed sand quarry site for any archaeology. It revealed a complex arrangement of buried features, which occasionally show up as crop marks in times of dry weather. Initial assessments indicate that these underground features are the surviving footprints of enclosures, connecting tracks and drove ways. In short, an abandoned settlement in all likelihood from the first millennium AD.

So, what makes this a deserted Saxon village? Evidence has been steadily accumulating and is compelling.

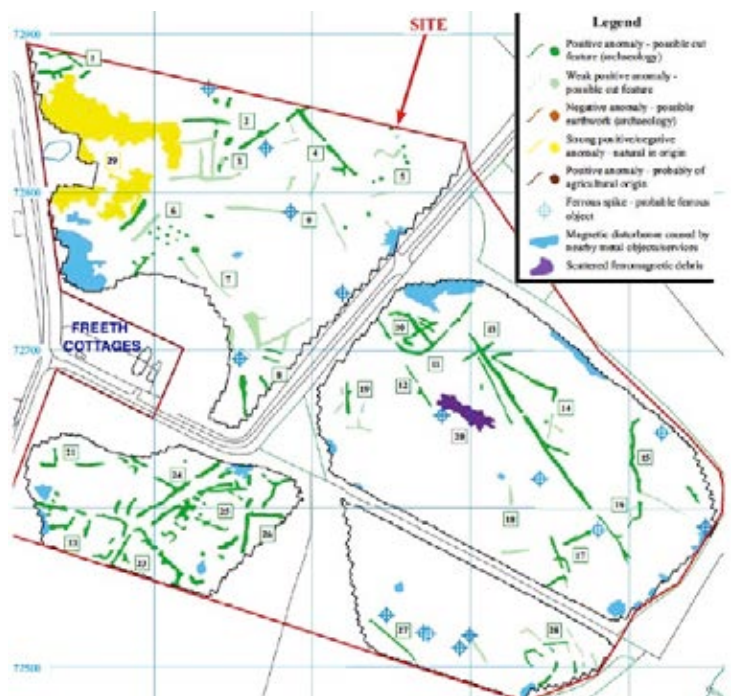
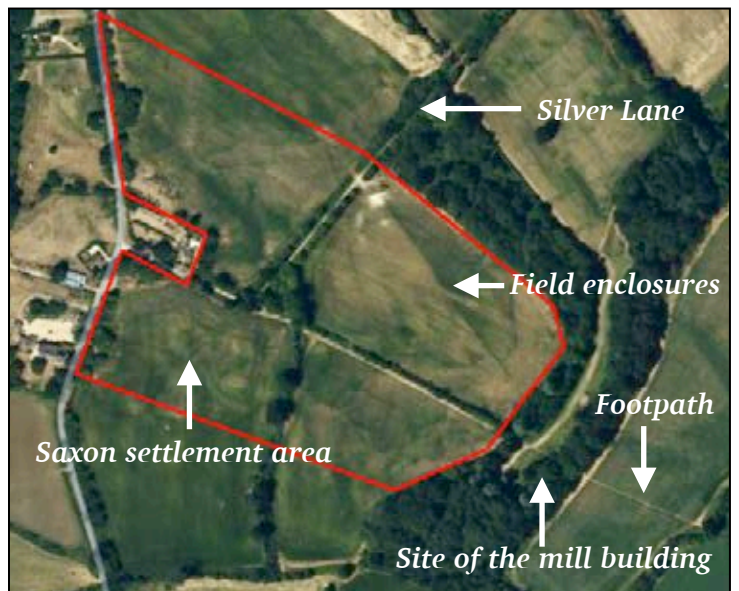
It's been known since the Domesday survey of 1086 that two mills existed in *Contone* (the Latinised name for Compton); they were water powered and used for grinding corn. One was on the Abberd Brook south-east of Freeth farm, while the second was probably much further along the stream near Calne, yet still in land that was held by Compton estate then.

Three separate estates existed here at that time: Compton was concentrated near the church and a second estate called Cumberwell was situated around the present Compton Farm area. However, the third estate's whereabouts, containing 19 householders in 1086, is something of a mystery even though all three had an equal share in the mill operation then and are well documented. Part of the reason for the loss of location is that the third manor merged with *Cumpton Bassett* by the mid 13th century, leaving two until Compton Cumberwell merged with Compton Bassett at around 1768.

A scrutiny of the archaeological finds record reveals that a considerable amount of early medieval material has been recovered from the fields between Freeth Farm and the Abberd Brook. Fragments of quern-stone (mill grinding stones) have been picked up and pottery of middle Saxon date (8th-9th centuries AD). The results from the geophysical survey showed that all the fields in the quarry site contain a large number of magnetic anomalies, or buried features, such as ditches and pits. Their layout suggests housing and farming enclosures. Even though the structures would have been timber-built, buried evidence will survive in the form of post holes, cut features for things like ditches, and who knows, maybe some nice artefacts will turn up when a pre-quarrying, archaeological excavation is carried out?



Highlighted areas are the proposed sand quarry, and the protected Scheduled Ancient Monument of a Saxon water mill and fish pond situated along the Abberd Brook.



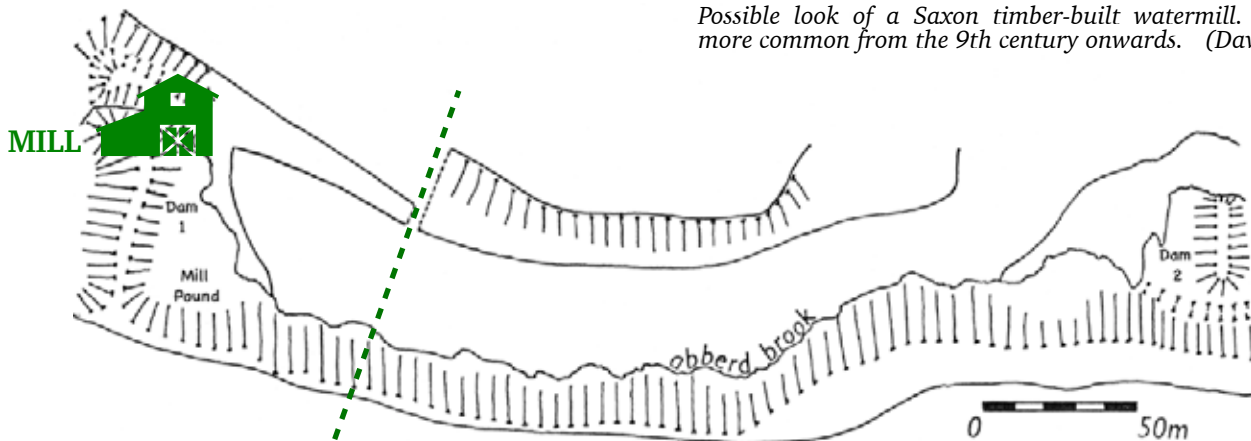
The probable settlement which existed here during the Saxon period, may well have had even earlier roots. The brook was essential for a reliable source of water and the area was a well wooded resource. The name given for the track that leads into the settlement is Silver Lane; *Silva* is latin for a dense collection of trees. A short distance along Silver Lane from Freeth takes you to a site of a Roman kiln, a little south-west of Manor farmhouse. A considerable amount of Roman pottery sherds and evidence of burning was discovered there during pipelaying in 1986, and two Roman coins were found nearby during the 1970s.

After it was absorbed by the Compton estate the settlement was abandoned most likely during the latter half of the 13th century. All this will be evaluated during a major archaeological excavation which has to take place before any quarrying operations can start, after which we should know a great deal more about the history of this lost settlement.

settlement south-east of Freeth, this will hopefully confirm the site as the missing third estate recorded in the Domesday survey. It also adjoins the water mill of the same period. The probability that the settlement was abandoned by the 14th century would be consistent with the archaeological record and documentary evidence. Nevertheless, the mill and fishpond remained in use for the two manors and are mentioned in 1342, in a description of a 'hamme' of meadow lying by the lord's fishpond. And in 1529, the



Possible look of a Saxon timber-built watermill. They became more common from the 9th century onwards. (Dave Coward).



The earthworks for the mill and pond, as surveyed by Chris Currie in 1994. Dam 2 is likely to have been the earlier one. Green dotted line is the east-west footpath that runs from Compton Bassett to Freeth. You can still make out the earthworks.

There is now no trace of the mill building on the Abberd Brook but earthworks for a dam and mill race can still be seen quite clearly. In fact two dams are there, one being 340 metres upstream of the other and it seems that an original pond, serving as a head of water to power a mill, was enlarged around 1240 by the construction of a second dam downstream to make a greater head of water. This was made possible by Philip de Cumberwell granting Gilbert Basset one acre of land beside a stream then called 'Penbrok'. It also presented an opportunity to stock the now large millpond with fish, enhancing the resource greatly. It became popular on the medieval dinner table to eat fish such as eel, bream, carp and pike, although it was very much a status food which few in a rural community could afford.

Given that early medieval archaeological finds and the recent geophysics report have uncovered an extensive area of a probable 1st millennium AD

mill was brought to the court of Compton Bassett manor, accused of overcharging.

Between the 14th and 15th centuries, grain milling changed to fulling, a process in woollen clothmaking that increases its thickness and density while cleansing the cloth of impurities. Documents from the early to mid 1700s refer to a fulling mill in Compton Bassett which is unlikely to have continued for much longer; small mills fell out of use as larger storage, greater power and mechanisation were needed.

In 1999 the mill site was designated as a scheduled monument (1018613):

'the millpond dams... are well preserved examples of this type of monument. Documentary evidence from the early medieval period shows that the watermill was in use for several hundred years.'

Laurie Waite

2023 Compton Bassett Parish Council



Pete Szczesiak
Chairman



Charles Reis
Vice-Chair



Julian Barlow



Peter Barnett

This month we welcome two new councillors, Edward Budge and Rod Lloyd-Davies, which brings us to our full quota of seven. Edward first came to the village in 2002 but has worked for an American bank in Japan for some of the intervening years. Rod moved here more recently after living la belle vie in France for 15 years. Before that he was a headteacher at three primary schools in the West Midlands.

Edward Budge

Rod Lloyd-Davies

Laurie Waite

Parish Clerk
Diane Zeitzen



Always contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance please

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