

# Compton Bassett Matters

Edited by Councillors Barlow and Waite for Compton Bassett Parish Council

Even  
more!

## Helping one another – Village shows great spirit at time of need

Dear Villager,

Welcome to a special Easter edition of our Parish Council Newsletter. This time of the season is usually a period of rejoicing, re-birth and rejuvenation as our idyllic part of Wiltshire springs to life. However, this year it is different. We still have our own rural beauty typified by the flowers, birds and animals in and around Compton Bassett but over it all hovers the threat of Coronavirus and phrases like *self-isolation*, *social distancing*, *furloughing*, *flattening the curve* and *lockdown* are common parlance throughout the country.

So, to bring some light relief we offer you a special edition of *Compton Bassett Matters*. Every item in this one-off publication has been submitted by a villager: whether a joke, puzzle, reminiscence, poem or picture. We have a plethora of talent around us and through this collection of material we wanted to copy the BBC maxim of informing, entertaining and perhaps educating by sharing these random contributions.

This period of isolation is stressful for many and its impact has been eased by amazing acts of selfless kindness shown by the people who live in this wonderful village. Our small compilation is one way for the Parish Council to say thank-you to all those helping and for their generosity of spirit.

Hopefully it may raise the odd smile and if nothing else will help you pass some time as we continue to stay apart and stay safe, together...

Did you hear that John Travolta was tested for Coronavirus last weekend?  
He's okay though, it was just Saturday Night Fever.

**And the people stayed home  
and read books, and listened,  
and rested, and exercised,  
and made art, and played games,  
and learned new ways of being,  
and were still.  
And listened more deeply.  
Some meditated,  
some prayed,  
some danced.  
Some met their shadows.  
And the people began to think differently.**

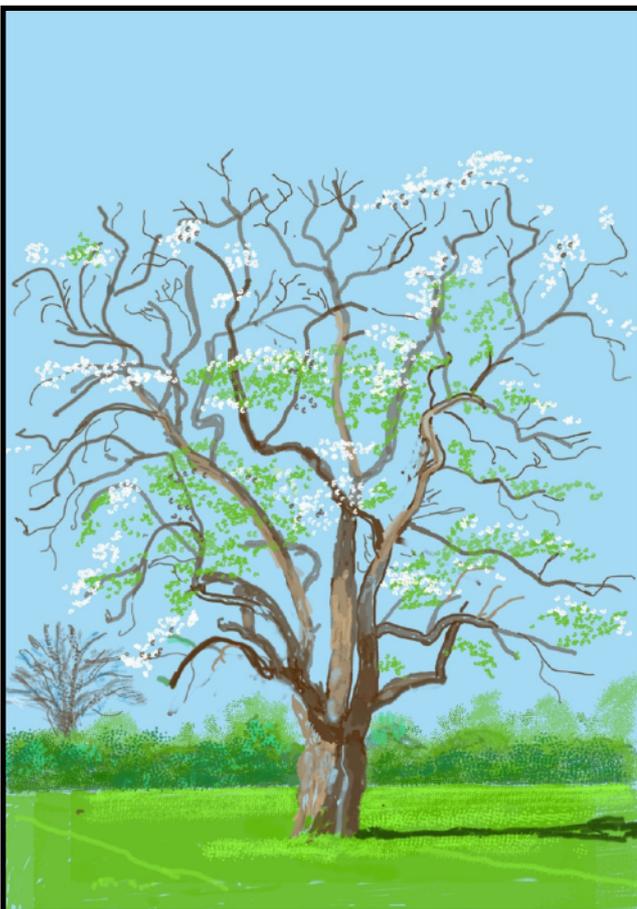
**And the people healed.  
And, in the absence of people living in ignorant,  
dangerous, mindless and heartless ways,  
the earth began to heal.**

**And when the danger passed,  
and the people joined together again,  
they grieved their losses,  
and made new choices,  
and dreamed new images,  
and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully,  
as they had been healed.**



*First Light. 2017 Annie Monk, local exhibiting artist.*

This poem was written in March 2020 by Kitty O'Meara and posted on her Facebook page. Kitty is a retired teacher and chaplain who lives in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. The poem reveals her worries for the present pandemic but, in her own words, it “offers a story of how it *could* be, what we could do with this time”.



*David Hockney in Normandy, painting during lockdown.*



*What a scream... Munch reworked for our time.*

## In Pursuit of Spring

Reflections on the life of Edward Thomas, British poet and novelist (1878–1917).

*Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed  
The speculating rooks at their nests cawed  
And saw from elm tops, delicate as flowers of grass,  
What we below could not see, winter pass*

This passing winter will be remembered as a mild one; a dominant Atlantic meant no repeat of last winter's tobogganing, no picture postcard scenes across the North Wessex Downs.

As I write this, spring is showing her hand: as snowdrops recede, daffodils have bloomed and forsythia blazes. The bluebells are groggily awakening. And yet, as spring inexorably marches on, we do not.

The above poem is Thaw by Edward Thomas, written on the cusp of spring, 1916. Thomas has seen something of a reputational renaissance recently; it was largely spurred by Matthew Hollis' excellent biography and the persistent championing of eminent naturalist, Robert Macfarlane. Before Thomas' death on the first morning of the Battle of Arras, 1917, he was chiefly known as something of a hack, living off review copy. However, his prose work has found a keen new audience – *The South Country*, and *In Pursuit of Spring* in particular. Whilst both works encompass a wider view of southern England, his writing on Wiltshire excels: the juxtaposition of ancient country, sweeping landscape with the minutest hedgerow detail.

As it was for Thomas, nature's ambivalence to our current plight is both consolation and balm: the celandines will continue to crowd the verges, the crocuses will come and go, and the speculating rooks will watch, bemused, as they have done since time immemorial. To our modern ear, the absent elms provide a knowing, eerie echo of our current situation.

Thomas loved Wiltshire above all other counties, spending weeks traversing our sprawling tracks and rolling downland, whiling away evenings in remote inns (the best place to learn both local folklore and local cadence).

Our pub may be closed, our lives on hold; but I will be sustained by the twin joys of the promise of the new season and the immersive pleasure of a good book.

**Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas** – Matthew Hollis (Faber & Faber)

**In Pursuit of Spring** – Edward Thomas (Little Toller)

**The South Country** – Edward Thomas (Little Toller)

**Collected Poems** – Edward Thomas (Faber & Faber)

Jeff Wheeler - bookseller and collector

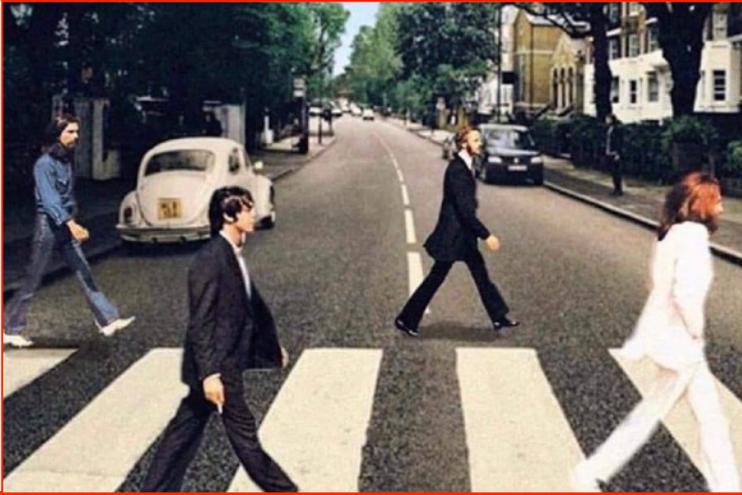


## Time Out

On a cool, early April evening, I took my dogs and pandemic anxieties up Compton Hill to the highest point in the parish, by the old barns. Taking in the calm, my immediate company consisted of song thrushes repeating their phrases, a few cawing rooks and an occasional pheasant croak.

Beyond this, silence pervaded. The 21st century was suspended, holding its breath; traffic was absent through the village and no motorbikes could be heard whining their way along the A4. The corridor of successive overhead flights was empty. In a temporal shift, I exchanged 2020 for 1900. It was wonderful interlude, all too soon subverted by the underlying tensions we face. I turned back, satisfied with a brief moment of quiet reverie.

## New Social Distancing Measures



## Thought for the Day

In this time of Coronavirus, while staying at home we should focus on inner peace. To achieve this we should always finish things we start and we all could use more calm in our lives.

I looked through my house to find things I'd started and hadn't finished, so I finished off a bottle of Vodka, a bottle of Gin, a bottle of Baileys, a bottle of wine, the remainder of Valiumun scriptuns, and a box of chocolates. You have no idea how fabulous I feel right now.

Send this to all who need inner peace. And tell them you love them. And two hash your wands, safe day everybody!!!

My husband purchased a world map, gave me a dart and said "throw this and wherever it lands I'm taking you there for a holiday, when this pandemic is over". Turns out we're spending two weeks behind the fridge.

## Cryptic Compton Bassett

- 1) Green buttons scattered in this nearby village
- 2) Caught in an act of disarray by brute rascal
- 3) Calling all lovers needing embrace, initially
- 4) Before the end of chimney, sweep utterly confused
- 5) Head north-east after visiting Harry?
- 6) Delivered in January, this religious figure has a heavy ending
- 7) This kid comes before a good chunk of land?
- 8) You'll be going around in circles with just one of these
- 9) Take a minor road to this urban dwelling
- 10) Do the crazy mad men live south of us?
- 11) The company starts before a boggy marsh
- 12) On his Summer Holiday, he played his Scottish instrument with full gusto



**The Virtual Bassett Cup will be awarded to the first correct answer received**

Guess the Illness	Your Horoscope This Week	Sudoku Puzzle Corner																																																															
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## Working with Sir George...

*Sir George Martin was one of the most influential music producers in the world, famous for his association with the Beatles, Cilla Black, Elton John and countless other pop and rock royalty.*

*Shirley Burns, who has lived in Compton Bassett for many years started working with George when she was 16 and continued in the role as his secretary until his death a few years ago. Here she recounts how she first met him in the early 1950s.*



...I never intended working at Abbey Road in the heart of the music business. In fact in the 1950s it was well before the hit parade was properly established and known as the publishing industry. However my father, who was not a well man, wanted me to leave school as soon as possible and help to contribute to family finances. Hence at 16, with some secretarial qualifications I went to see what you might now call a recruitment company. The lady who eventually interviewed me was the wife of a music publisher herself and in those days before the charts, there were around 80 music publishers in London all licensing and selling sheet music and records. They were mainly based around Soho and Denmark Street. She mentioned the studios in Abbey Road and that a publisher called Parlophone was looking for a clerical assistant. It was only a couple of stops on the underground for me, so it seemed ideal. The fact that I liked music and the arts, although I was quite young, seemed to impress her so along I went for an interview.

Abbey Road is now very famous but then it was just another building and as I entered the corridor leading up to the room for the interview I was aghast to see a line of young ladies waiting to interview for the same job. They all seemed to have poise and grace resembling students from Cheltenham Ladies College. Thinking I stood little chance, I knocked timidly on the door and was greeted by a very well spoken lady called Miss Lockhart-Smith and the founder of the business Mr Oscar Preuss. He was sitting upright at his desk and had a big cigar; I recall the smoke from the cigar formed a sort of smog around his room. But he had considerable bearing, was friendly and after a little session of talking about jazz with him and undertaking a shorthand test with Miss Lockhart-Smith they thanked me for my time and bade me farewell.

Surprisingly, when I arrived home there was a message waiting that they wanted me to start as soon as possible. That was 1952, I started almost immediately and it was not long before I met George Martin. His job was to help Oscar who was not really a producer and more of a businessman. He would have been about 26 years old and had started at Parlophone a couple of years before me.

George was much younger than most people making records then, who were all in their forties. At six foot two inches tall, he had a certain bearing about him. Very handsome, well spoken and we all used to think of him as resembling the Duke of Edinburgh. He spent most of his time working with classical or jazz artists at that time and it was not long before I used to have to send out 100s of royalty cheques every quarter to the artists he recorded. It was the start of a wonderful career with super people. Miss Lockhart-Smith, who I came to know as Judy, soon became my boss as George Martin's secretary and eventually they were to marry and become like a surrogate family to me. Although George has now sadly passed away I still talk to Judy regularly some 68 years after we first met at that interview.

**Shirley Burns**

## Jack Fell – Recollections of a Compton Bassett Villager (1908–1988)

“1920 came. My brother Sidney was working at White’s farm with S Hooper, looking after the cows. There was a pilot living in the farm house then. He did do some stunt flying and it is said that he came over and banked his plane and picked up an apple off a tree in the orchard.

The Whitsun holidays came and we had a week’s holiday from school. I went stone picking in the fields behind the rectory for Mr Miflin.

But on Friday morning as me was getting up it started thundering heavy and it got worse, thunder and lightning and it was half dark all day, until, about 4.30, they said a cloud burst over the village. There was water coming straight down the hill from Broad Way, flooding White’s Farm cellar and numbers 33 and 34 where Worthy Woodman and Eli Burgess lived. The water was rushing off the hills everywhere as it was very deep from No 30 to No 35, as there was no safety drains in then and the old stone drain under the road could not cope with the water.

Me see Harry Collier go down the road in the late afternoon up to his waist in water holding an umbrella over his head. In the paper the following appeared: *‘A man was seen to walk down Compton Bassett street, up to his waist in water, with an umbrella to keep his top storey dry’*”.



*Jack & Ada Fell on their wedding day in 1952. The old village hall is behind.*

### Compton Bassett Village Schooldays

I went to school in Compton Bassett between 1945 and 1951. The large classroom was at the front of the building with the boys entrance at one end, and the girls at the other.

The classroom was heated by a large tortoise stove which was coke fuelled. We had individual wooden desks and one teacher, Miss Wild as I remember. She was quite strict and would wield her ruler across one’s knuckles. Here are a few entries from my diary dated September 1950 to April 1951.

*Sunday Nov. 12th:* I went to the service at the memorial, and watched Captain Benson unveiling it. The memorial was for people who fell in the wars 1914–18 & 1939–45. Afterwards I went to church.

*Monday Nov. 20th:* After tea Mrs Palmer came to our house and warned us that water was pouring down our lane, and then we saw that it was coming down the drive and down the garden path. It started to come into the house, so mummy and daddy went outside and built walls against the gates to stop the water.

*Thursday No. 23rd:* I sat for the intelligence test.

*Friday Nov. 24th:* The school dentist examined my teeth today.

*Wednesday Nov 29th:* In the afternoon an aeroplane caught fire, crash landing about six fields but the pilot was not hurt. One of the wings was ripped off and the propeller was bent back.

*Saturday Jan 13th 1951:* At four ‘o’ clock I went to the Christmas party in the village hall. First we had tea and after we played some games and at 5.45 a conjuror came and did some tricks. When the conjuror had gone Father Christmas came and gave us presents from a Christmas tree and I had a book.

*Thursday Feb 27th:* School Medical Officer visited for Diphtheria Immunisation.

*Tuesday Mar 6th:* In the morning a policeman came to talk about road safety.

Attendances were already dwindling by the 1930s and the school finally closed in 1964.



*Class of 1947. Back row l to r: Roy Rest, Anthea Tarry, Tom King, Jean Phillips, John Dredge, Maureen Mathews, Roy Godwin. Middle row: Graham Barber, Jennifer Pickford, Sheila Weston, Linda Weston, ?, ?. Front row: ?, Peter Barnett, Brian Godwin.*

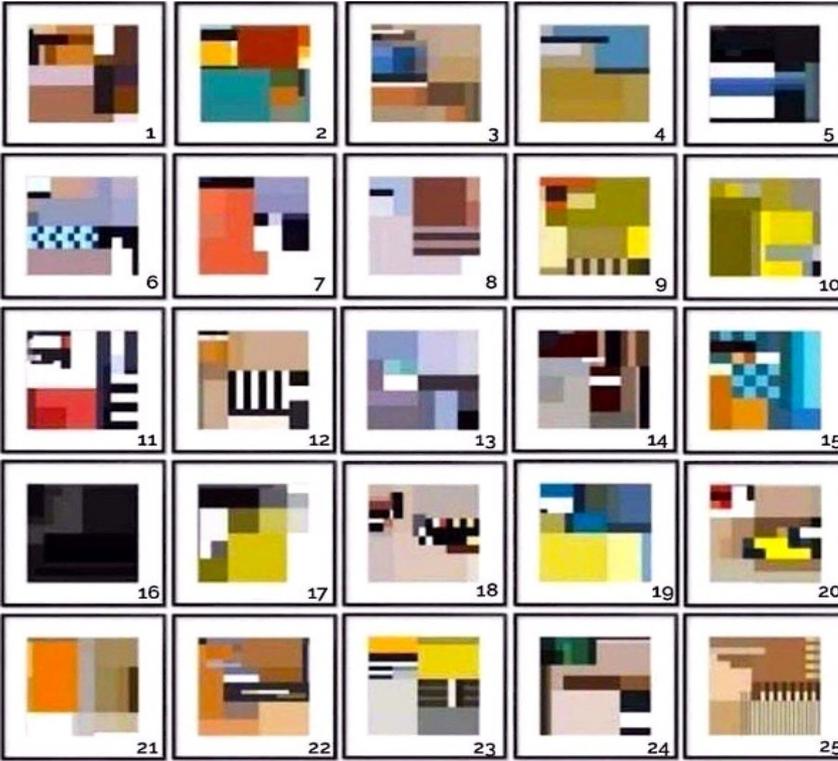
**Peter Barnett**

I went to the supermarket this morning and watched a guy purchase a piñata, some paella rice and a sombrero. I thought to myself... Hispanic buying.

For all those who wanted a world with no vaccines, here's the world without ONE vaccine...

### Name That Bird

Unscramble the image: It's the colours that are the clues to each bird



### Compton Bassett House Names

R	E	G	D	O	L	E	K	I	P	N	R	U	T
E	O	N	T	H	E	B	A	R	N	C	R	O	T
M	R	A	F	R	O	N	A	M	S	H	M	S	H
A	O	L	D	F	O	R	G	E	A	A	A	I	A
W	O	O	D	V	I	L	L	E	O	L	G	O	T
H	O	O	P	E	R	S	M	A	R	K	N	T	C
C	O	L	D	S	C	H	O	O	L	S	O	I	H
R	M	R	A	F	E	M	O	H	O	T	L	L	L
T	A	N	G	L	E	W	O	O	D	O	I	L	D
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D	A	I	R	Y	H	O	U	S	E	E	M	E	E
I	M	S	E	L	A	D	G	U	D	S	E	S	L
E	R	N	E	T	T	H	E	F	R	E	E	T	H
U	F	E	M	R	A	F	N	O	T	P	M	O	C

- TANGLEWOOD
- COMPTONFARM
- CHALKSTONES
- OLDSCHOOL
- OLDFORGE
- TURNPIKELODGE
- THEFREETH
- DAIRYHOUSE
- HOMEFARM
- DUGDALES
- MAGNOLIA
- MOLEEND
- MANORFARM
- THEBARN
- TILLIES
- WOODVILLE
- THATCH
- HOOPERS

### Name the Pop Group

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**QUIZ ANSWERS:** Guess the Illness: 1) Black Death, 2) Foot and Mouth, 3) TB, 4) Swine Flu, 5) Yellow Fever, 6) Ebola, 7) Chicken Pox, 8) Coronavirus, 9) Typhoid Fever, 10) Rubella, Bonus) SARS.  
**Name the Bird:** 1) Hawfinch, 2) Bee Eater, 3) Bluethroat, 4) Nuthatch, 5) Magpie, 6) Jay, 7) Bullfinch, 8) Shrike, 9) Green Woodpecker, 10) Greenfinch, 11) Great Spotted Woodpecker, 12) Hoopoe, 13) Woodpigeon, 14) House Sparrow, 15) Kingfisher, 16) Jackdaw, 17) Great Tit, 18) Waxwing, 19) Blue Tit, 20) Goldfinch, 21) Robin, 22) Chaffinch, 23) Goldcrest, 24) Mallard, 25) Wren.  
**Pop Groups:** 1) Electric Light Orchestra, 2) Pet Shop Boys, 3) Angry Box, 4) Bucks Fizz, 5) Radiohead, 6) Red Hot Chili Peppers, 7) The Angels, 8) One Direction, 9) Monkeys, 10) Tears for Fears, 11) Weather Girls, 12) Beach Boys, 13) Simply Red, 14) Guns n' Roses, 15) Def Leppard, 16) Cars, 17) T Rex, 18) Steps, 19) Zombies, 20) Dollar, 21) Boom Town Rats, 22) Queen, 23) Police, 24) Adam and the Ants, 25) Scorpion, 26) White Snake, 27) Haircut One Hundred, 28) Goldplay, 29) Motorhead, 30) Arctic Monkeys.

Mexico is asking USA President Trump to hurry up and build the wall NOW!

## How Coronavirus Has Changed Us

- People are learning to cope without the NHS. Many accident departments are half full as people realise that a broken finger nail isn't an emergency after all.
- All NHS and social care staff have now been given free car parking; it would be nice if they gained more recompense after this crisis than just memories of a handclap.
- The selflessness of 600,000 volunteers for the NHS shows that in spite of rumours to the contrary when the chips are down this country will unite in common cause.
- Finally some good news - petrol is down to as low as £1 per litre. Bad news - you can't drive anywhere.
- Bats are even returning to roost in Wuhan.

Do you know what goes really well with Corona virus? Lime disease.



## Mystery Photograph

On the left is a photo that has been donated to the Compton Bassett history photographic archive but unfortunately we know very little about it.

What we have been told is that the event took place in the White Horse Inn skittle alley during 1967. But can you put any names to the faces?

Please contact Laurie Waite on 815995 with any details, or [lauriewaite@hotmail.com](mailto:lauriewaite@hotmail.com)

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the Fighting Fund, which has helped to finance this publication.

## Your Area Coordinators for Volunteers

**AREA 1: Freeth to No. 35 Compton Bassett (SN11 8RD & 8RE)**

**Coordinator: Laurie Waite**

**Contact: 815995 – 07831 131171 – Email: [lauriewaite@hotmail.com](mailto:lauriewaite@hotmail.com)**

**AREA 2: Compton Farm to No. 48 The Old Laundry (SN11 8RE, 8RF, 8RG, 8RH & 8RQ)**

**Name: Pete Szczesiak**

**Contact: 815006 – 07484 364252 – Email: [peter.szczesiak01@gmail.com](mailto:peter.szczesiak01@gmail.com)**

**AREA 3: No. 48 to Breach Farm House (SN11 8RH, 8SW, 8SP & 8SN)**

**Coordinator: Julian Barlow**

**Contact: 760788 – 07747 852070 – Email: [julian@barlowcomms.co.uk](mailto:julian@barlowcomms.co.uk)**

***Are you at risk of severe illness if you catch Coronavirus? Stay home, stay safe and use our service!***