

Compton Bassett Matters

Edited by Councillors Barlow and Waite for Compton Bassett Parish Council

Christmas in Compton

It's going to be a funny sort of Christmas this year with bubbles replacing baubles and tiers supplanting tinsel. This is (hopefully!?) our last lockdown *Compton Bassett Matters* and once again this special festive issue borrows from the maxim of aiming to inform, entertain and engage our readers.

No one will deny that 2020 was a strange, unique sort of year for us all. With the skies falling silent, nature reclaiming the land and Thursday evenings ringing to the sound of applause for those who put themselves selflessly in harm's way to help others.

Compton Bassett rose to the challenge and showed what a strong and giving community is present in our small village. From the phenomenal work of the parish council volunteer posse, to individual acts of kindness, there are too many to mention. We looked after one another and ensured that anyone who required help could get it.

Now looking forward, we have high hopes that in a few months the words coronavirus, self-isolation and face masks will be consigned to the dustbin of history as we all pin our hopes on a vaccine.

These special issues of *Compton Bassett Matters* have all been supported by kind donors and produced by volunteers. If they have raised the odd smile or piqued your interest our work has been worthwhile.

Enjoy Christmas, have a lovely new year and let's all look forward to a great 2021.

Julian Barlow and Laurie Waite



A year to remember and a year to forget

The Christmas of Compton Past

1940s – Jimmer Taylor remembers the Children's Christmas Party given by the Church and School in the old Village Hall near where the War Memorial is now; it was a wooden hut which became the Henly's turkey shed in their orchard at Freeth Farm. Captain Benson always used to come to the party. Each Christmas, those whose parents worked for the Fielding Johnsons at the Manor Farm were given a hamper with a turkey, bacon, nuts and other goodies and if there were children in the family, a toy.

1927 – All Cooperative Society employees of the village estate had a supper in the ballroom at Compton Bassett House with singing afterwards. The house had been officially vacant since 1918 and was demolished mid 1930s.

c.1920 – Rev. Lawrence Greenstreet and his father gave a Christmas party to all village schoolchildren, held in the 'long room' (skittle alley) at the pub. Every child received a present from Father Christmas, acted by 'Uncle Jack' Rumming, a great village character.

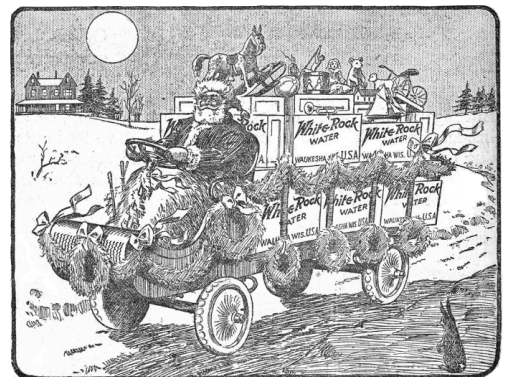
Five Christmas Myths

We'll avoid the most obvious one about Christ being born on 25th December, but I bet you didn't know about the true meanings of all of the following myths.

1

It's a popular myth that Coca-Cola was the first to use Santa Claus bedecked in red and white for their 1931 advert. The White Rock Beverage Company advertised with a very familiar looking Santa in 1915 (right).

Santa was also used to promote Murad Turkish cigarettes in 1919, which apparently all 'grown-ups' were choosing for Christmas. The name Santa Claus is an Americanised corruption of the Dutch for St Nicholas, *Sinterklaas*. Dutch families began celebrating St Nicholas in New York in 1773 and 'Santa Claus' was first used in the American press then.



Santa Claus now includes the unsurpassed mineral water White Rock among his tokens of the Yuletide.

2

☀️ Good King Wenceslas, wasn't a king but actually Duke of Bohemia. He was virtuous and led the government well for nine years but was assassinated, aged 27, on the orders of his brother, in a bad case of sibling rivalry. ☀️



3

"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" lyrics written by Charles Wesley?

It doesn't even appear as a line in his hymn. Wesley wrote "Hark how all the Welkin rings, Glory to the King of Kings", and gave it the title "Hymn for Christmas-Day".

But 15 years later, in 1754, preacher George Whitfield changed the lines in his collection of hymns, to the ones we know now. The music is by Felix Mendelssohn.

4

We Three Kings of Orient Are

John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820–1891)



We Three Kings of Orient Are? American John Henry Hopkins Jr. wrote the Christmas carol in 1857 but only one of the three pieces of information in this title is correct. Nowhere in the bible does it mention the number of Magi present, or whether they were royal. They did travel "from the east" though, according to Matthew.



5

"Jingle Bells" is a Christmas carol? Wrong!

The song, originally entitled "One Horse Open Sleigh", was written by American James Pierpont in 1857 but had no connection with Christmas. It relates to sleigh races held on Salem Street in Medford, Massachusetts in the early 1800s and was a popular drinking song. The original melody had a significantly different but equally catchy chorus as well.

It was the first song ever to be broadcast from space on 16 December 1965, which followed a spoof report given by the two-man Gemini 6 crew, Tom Stafford and Wally Schirra, who said they'd spotted a satellite going from north to south in a very low polar orbit!

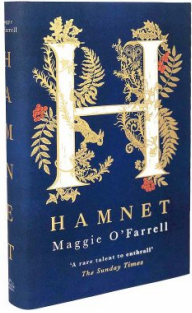
Christmas Reads – exclusive offer!

This Christmas we've teamed up with Waterstones Chippenham bookshop to give you a special offer. From now until close of business Christmas Eve, Compton Bassett villagers receive **15% discount** on any book in stock at the shop (can't be redeemed in conjunction with other offers though). All you need to do is to take a copy of *Compton Bassett Matters - Christmas Special* with you to the shop.

Waterstones national book reviewer Jeff Wheeler recommends some great reads for this Christmas



Hamnet – Maggie O'Farrell 9781472223791



Fellow novelist, Marian Keyes, reviewed *Hamnet* by saying that O'Farrell's eighth novel was 'Stunning. The writing is exquisite, immersive and compelling...deserves to win prizes.' A couple of months later, with the prestigious Women's Prize under her belt, *Hamnet* is the frontrunner for this year's Waterstones Book of the Year (not announced at time of writing – I'll eat my hat, and everyone else's, if it doesn't win).

At its heart, the novel is a reimagining of the life of Shakespeare's son: a deftly wrought late sixteenth century period piece. But the novel has deeper currents, beautifully crafted tangents that eddy their way through the narrative. It is as gripping as it poignant.

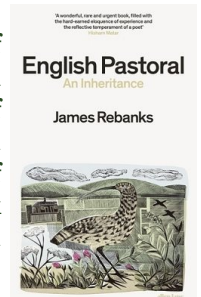
Maggie O'Farrell has always been acknowledged as one of our finest storytellers – with *Hamnet* she has written what many believe to be the novel of her career. A must read.

English Pastoral – James Rebanks 9780241245729

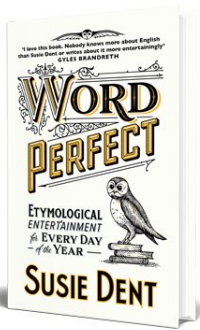
James Rebanks soared to the top of the bestseller list with his first book, *A Shepherd's Life*; an elegiac tale of twenty first century Lakeland shepherding. Whilst the geography of his second, wildly successful, book remains constant (he's a third generation Lake District farmer), he expands his horizon to encompass a more universal view of our relationship with both the land and our rich and varied wildlife.

When Rebanks inherited the farm, it was far removed from the idyll of his childhood: no workers in the fields, barns crumbling, once teeming skies as empty as the hedgerows. His challenge was a simple one – to revive his pastoral landscape, to recreate a sustainable corner of his beloved fells.

The book – part memoir, part natural history – avoids the wistfulness that can hamper other such accounts. Instead, Rebanks offers a clear eyed, robust, narrative; set down in sparkling prose.



Word Perfect – Susie Dent 9781529311518



Every Christmas our bookshops are crammed with the perfect stocking fillers: a jumble of books offering a mixture of the intriguing, the curious, and the downright daft. This year, the must have stocking filler is *Word Perfect*.

Over the years, Susie Dent has made her way out from *Countdown's* Dictionary Corner, to receive that most hallowed of accolades – a national treasure. She cements this position with this Christmas cracker.

Word Perfect advertises itself as offering 'etymological entertainment for every day of the year', an almanac of trivial linguistic titbits. It's important, for example, to know that the word 'snaccident' refers to the rather guilty feeling coming from devouring a whole pack of biscuits. What is a Gigglemug? Why do the kids always rogitate on long car journeys? I guarantee you'll love getting to the bottom of these questions (as you croozle in your hibernacle).

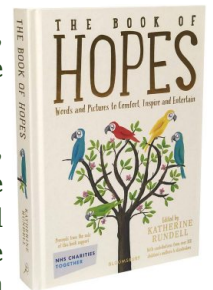
The Book of Hopes – Katherine Rundell 9781526629883

The Book of Hopes is an uplifting, magical collection, compiled by one of the rising stars of children's fiction.

In this most challenging of years, Katherine Rundell wanted to provide some hope in the dark. She contacted some of the writers and artists whose work she most admires, 'I asked them to write something very short, fiction or non-fiction, or draw something that would make the children reading it feel like possibility-ists: something that would make them laugh or wonder or snort or smile.'

The result is a treasure trove, a joy – short stories, pictures, and poems by such leading luminaries as Jacqueline Wilson, Lauren Child, and Michael Morpurgo.

Shortlisted for this year's Waterstones Book of the Year, *The Book of Hopes* is sure to be a Christmas favourite. It will certainly keep the kids entertained; it might just do the same for those of a slightly older vintage...

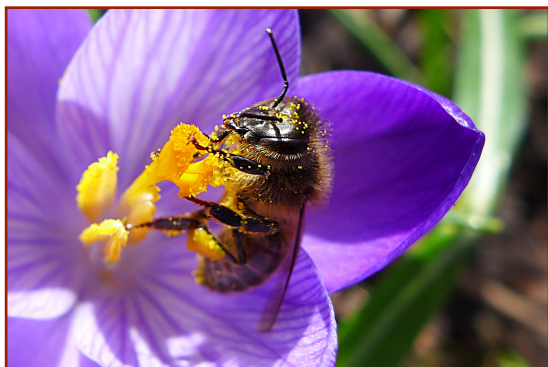


Creating the Christmas Buzz!

By amateur apiarist
Julian Barlow

Winter is one of those times of the year when all you want to do is hunker down, warm yourself by the fire, grab a cup of tea, a slice of toast (according to Nigella!) and ponder life. Bees are no different in this respect to humans. They prefer their own honey stores to tea and generate their own heat but the principle is the same.

In cold climates, honey bees stop flying when the temperature drops below about 10°C (50°F). It's a hard life being a bee and the bee lifecycle is not long, for instance the lifespan of workers varies considerably over the year in regions with long winters. Workers born in spring and summer work hard, and live only a few weeks, but those born in autumn remain inside for several months as the colony clusters. On average during the year, about 1% of a colony's worker bees die naturally per day. Except for the queen, all of a colony's workers are replaced about every four months. In practical terms, at the height of summer there are likely to be around 50,000 bees in an average hive in Wiltshire.



Bee on crocus.

Richard Rickitt

At this time of year however, that has slimmed down to perhaps only 5,000. The honey bee is the only bee to maintain a colony throughout the winter. The colony reduces its size in autumn and relies on its stores of honey to last it through the winter months when it is too cold for foraging or there is no forage available. That is why bee-keepers are careful to "heft" their hives at the end of the season to test the weight of the hive and see if there are enough honey stores to see the bees through winter. If not, they may supplement these stores with sugar syrup which the bees will store for later use, or maybe after Christmas, perhaps some fondant to see them through the winter.

At this time of year the bees in a colony crowd into the central area of the hive to form a "winter cluster". The worker bees huddle around the queen bee at the centre of the cluster, shivering to keep the centre between 27°C (81°F) at the start of winter (during the broodless period) and 34°C (93°F) once the queen resumes laying again. The worker bees rotate through the cluster from the outside to the inside so that no bee gets too cold. The outside edges of the cluster stay at about 8–9°C (46–48°F). The colder the weather is outside, the more compact the cluster becomes. During winter, they consume their stored honey to produce body heat.

For the amateur bee-keeper, keeping the bees alive through the winter is a challenge. Last year we lost our three colonies to damp and disease which wiped out any honey collecting for this past year, because any new colony you introduce takes around 18 months to become established. Major concerns over the winter include ensuring you have a dry cavity for the bees to overwinter in; damp can kill a colony. In autumn, bees will create their own form of glue called propolis, made by mixing saliva and beeswax with exudate gathered from tree buds, sap flows, or other botanical sources. This sticks the hive parts together to make their home watertight. But to help, some beekeepers also insulate hives for winter, either with a layer of insulating material over the top cover board or right over the hive like a tea cosy.

The hive entrance must be kept clear in winter both for ventilation and to allow bees to go on cleansing flights or short foraging trips. Woodpeckers or mice must be guarded against, both of whom love the honey. For rodents the hive is the ideal winter home, being nice and warm with a ready source of food. Hence a mouse-guard, which has holes small enough for the bees to fly an out but which will deter mice, is an essential piece of kit. But the major worry is disease. Adult bee diseases such as Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus or Nosema will shorten the lifespan of individual bees, meaning the colony population may be too low to survive until spring.

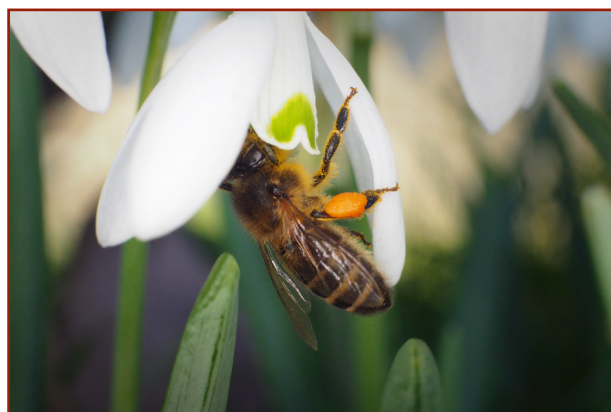


Bee hive ready for the winter.

However, Varroa is probably the best known and biggest threat. It is a small mite, smaller than a pin head which attaches to the body of the bee and weakens the bee by sucking fat bodies. The species is a vector for at least five debilitating bee viruses. A significant mite infestation leads to the death of a honey bee colony, usually in the late autumn through early spring. By this time of year most beekeepers will have applied an effective Varroa treatment after honey harvest, so the mite population is as low as possible going into winter. Most use oxalic acid Varroa treatments around Christmas time but those who are disinclined towards chemical intervention will use rhubarb leaves, which has naturally occurring oxalic acid or just leave nature to do her thing and keep fingers crossed.

How can we help the Honey Bee?

When Bees emerge from the hive later in the year around March time, we can do our bit to help out and this is where a Christmas gift of Garden Pollinators can come in useful. Spring bulbs are a good choice. Suttons Seeds, one of the larger suppliers of garden products have said that this year early demand for Bulbs in the last couple of months has more than doubled compared to last year, maybe a feature of all of us being unable to travel and perusing the catalogue's for inspiration. Native snowdrops, winter aconites, as well as crocus in the sunnier areas are helpful and when they first appear are popular with bees, who may be enticed out of the hive on the odd warm winter day. Just remember that we can always pop into the kitchen for some more tea and toast but when bees emerge after winter they do not have the energy to fly far and so your bulbs could be a life-saver.



Honey bee on snowdrop.

Richard Rickitt

Top 5 Flowers and 5 herbs to help bees:

1. **Common poppy** - Poppies can bloom from early summer, right up until October – giving bees months of pollen.
2. **Evergreen clematis** - These plants are great climbers – why not use them to brighten up a wall, or drape them over a pergola to provide shade during the summer?
3. **Foxglove** - Bees absolutely love foxgloves, and on some days it seems like they're almost queueing up to crawl inside their many petals.
4. **Nasturtium** - Nasturtiums are easy to grow and come in many different varieties. For ultimate ease, make sure to buy a perennial variant to avoid having to re-plant each year.
5. **Teasel** - Teasels are a 2 in 1 solution – bees love them when they're flowering, and birds such as goldfinches love them when they're seeding.

Bee-friendly herbs:

1. **Bronze Fennel** - Bronze fennel is not only a beautiful ornamental plant that looks perfectly at home in your flower border and is a great plant to support bees – it also tastes great. Pick the smallest new shoots in Spring for a burst of aniseed flavour, which works fantastically in salads or herbal tea.
2. **Green Coriander Seed** - Coriander is a staple herb for lots of dishes and is easy to grow in pots on your windowsill. It does have one small problem, though: it goes to seed easily, making the leaves quite tough and bitter. Don't throw the plant out at this stage, however – you can grow it on and harvest the seed. The unripe seeds have a flavour somewhere between the fresh leaf and the dry coriander seed.
3. **Chive Flowers** - Chives are almost indestructible but keeping a supply of fresh leaves isn't easy – especially when the weather gets hot and dry.
4. **Lemon Thyme** - Thyme is one of the most well-known herbs, and really hardy. It suits a range of growing spots, doing equally well in borders, pots in the garden, or on the windowsill. It's also a particular favourite of our buzzing friends. There are lots of different thymes, and lemon thyme combines the familiar punchy aroma of thyme with fresh lemon overtones.
5. **Basil** - If you're a fan of home-made pizza, having a fresh supply of basil on your windowsill or in your garden is a must. Basil isn't too hard to grow from seed and can thrive either in pots or in a greenhouse. In a sunny year you can even grow a good crop outdoors.

*In Germany they're preparing for Christmas by stocking up with sausage and cheese.
That's the Wurst Käse scenario.*

Compton's Christmas Cocktails

Try these delicious and warming festive cocktails as we say a heartfelt cheerio to 2020.

The Cumberwell Cracker – serves 6

Ingredients

1 bottle prosecco
100ml Southern Comfort
100ml gin
100ml pomegranate juice
0.25 tsp ground allspice

Method

Pour ingredients, except prosecco, into a cocktail shaker and add plenty of ice. Shake and strain between six glasses. Fill up with prosecco. Garnish with a slice of orange and a few pomegranates.



Moreish Mocktail – serves 6

Ingredients

500ml pomegranate juice
250ml apple juice
handful of mint
1 cinnamon stick
2 x 20ml ginger slices
500ml lemonade

Method

Put all ingredients except lemonade and half the mint into a large jug. Add plenty of ice and chill in the fridge for 20 minutes. Add lemonade when ready to serve, pour through a sieve and garnish with remainder of mint.



Starve Knoll Hot Toddy – serves 6

Ingredients

1 ltr dry cider
100ml dark rum
150ml apple juice
6 cloves
2 cinnamon sticks
1 orange
brown sugar to taste

Method

Pour the cider, rum, apple juice and brown sugar into a large saucepan over a low to medium heat. Halve the orange, spear in the cloves into each half and add to the pan. Bring to a simmer, then turn down the heat and serve.



1854: Christmas Pudding with snow and potatoes!

Russell Trall was an early promoter of vegetarianism and opposed the consumption of alcohol, coffee, meat, tea, vinegar, salt & pepper, and believed spices were dangerous to health. He also advocated a cold bath daily. It sounds like a lot of fun, doesn't it? So, we thought you might like his Christmas pudding recipe. It's an extract from his book, published in 1854, *The New Hydropathic Cook-Book* - all very nutritious and tasty, I'm sure.

Mix together a pound and a quarter of wheaten flour or meal, half a pint of sweet cream, a pound of stoned raisins, four ounces of currants, four ounces of potatoes, mashed, five ounces of brown sugar, and a gill of milk. When thoroughly worked together, add eight large spoonfuls of clean snow; diffuse it through the mass as quickly as possible; tie the pudding tightly in a bag previously wet in cold water, and boil four hours.

The book states that "It is a singular fact that puddings may be made light with snow instead of eggs – a circumstance of some importance in the winter season, when eggs are dear and snow is cheap. Two large tablespoonfuls are equivalent to one egg. The explanation is found in the fact that snow involves within its flakes a large amount of atmospheric air, which is set free as the snow melts."



The Christmas Quiz – answers on page 8

1. True or False: Handel's *Messiah* was originally written for Easter
2. Which country donates the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square?
3. Which US President makes an appearance in *Home Alone 2*?
4. Which monarch delivered the first Christmas broadcast?
5. Who is the patron saint celebrated on 26th December?
6. Which two reindeer are named after types of weather?
7. What is the best-selling Christmas single ever?
8. Where was Mommy seen kissing Santa Claus?
9. How many tips do natural snowflakes have?
10. Where was Santa Claus born?
11. What is the second line in the song *White Christmas*?
12. Who was the first British monarch to eat turkey for Christmas?
13. Which country started the tradition of having a Christmas tree?
14. On the eleventh day of Christmas, what did my true love bring to me?
15. The first recorded Christmas celebration in England was in which century?
16. What is the name of Ebenezer Scrooge's late business partner in *A Christmas Carol*?
17. Which act are alone in having the most (four) Christmas number one singles in the UK?
18. Which famous New York department store was featured in *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947)?
19. The old English custom of wassailing developed into which modern day Christmas tradition?
20. Voted the best Christmas film of all time, in *It's a Wonderful Life*, what happens every time a bell rings?



Name these British wild animals

Answers on page 8



The first four words you see describe you.

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



The dumbest thing I ever did this year was to buy a 2020 Planner



Pre-Christmas Star Show

There could be a treat in store this month as our winter skies will be lit up by the Geminid meteor shower. At its most intense over the 13–14th December there could be as many as 100 per hour. If we get a clear night sky, look out for these fragments in a stream of debris left behind by asteroid 3200 Phaeton. This display promises to be unusual in that, they should be multi-coloured! Light pollution of course affects the quality and numbers that are visible although in Compton Bassett, we are extremely fortunate in being able to enjoy relatively low levels of night lighting. Good luck star gazers!



I still can't believe people's survival instincts led them to grab toilet paper



Late News...

There's to be no Nativity this year because the three wise men face a travel ban. The shepherds have been furloughed. The innkeeper has shut under Tier 3 regulations and had a slump in bookings. Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of six with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen. As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test.



Santa supports the NHS!

He's cancelled his private elf insurance



Answers: British wild animals - A. Badger B. Field Vole C. Red Squirrel D. Wood Mouse E. Rat F. Weasel G. Polecat H. Roe Deer I. Hedgehog J. Rabbit K. Wild Cat L. Hazel Dormouse M. Muntjac Deer N. Stoat O. Fox P. Otter. The Christmas Quiz - 1. True 2. Norway, since 1947 3. Donald Trump 4. George V written by Rudyard Kipling 5. Saint Stephen 6. Donner and Blitzen 7. Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* 8. Underneath the mistletoe 9. Six 10. St Nicholas was a Greek born monk in modern-day Turkey around AD 280 11. Just like the ones I used to know 12. King Henry VIII 13. Germany 14. Eleven pipers piping 15. 11th century (1038) 16. Jacob Marley 17. The Beales, though they never wrote a Christmas song 18. Macy's 19. Singing Christmas carols 20. An angel gets its wings.



Sometimes it's hard to Lego

Your Area Coordinators for Volunteer Help or Advice

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

Coordinator: Laurie Waite

Contact: 815995 – 07831 131171 – Email: 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

**AREA 3: No. 49 to Breach Farm House
(SN11 8RH, 8SW, 8SP & 8SN)**

Coordinator: Julian Barlow

Contact: 760788 – 07747 852070 – Email: julian@barlowcomms.co.uk

**We must
keep on protecting
each other.**



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

STAY ALERT. CONTROL THE VIRUS. SAVE LIVES.