

Four year campaign finally brings speed restrictions to village

After an intensive lobbying campaign that started in earnest back in 2020, the village finally has a new 30 mph zone and a lengthened 40 mph stretch of road fully signposted for vehicles.

Comments from these sad and misguided keyboard critics included the usual claims of “traffic fascists” – “have you people not got something better to do” and the rather prosaic “the elderly out shafting us guys who go to work”. There were some staunch defenders from outside the village who pointed out that this was a great example of community spirit.

Compton Bassett has too long been regarded as a rat-run by motorists who want to avoid traffic lights, busy junctions and zebra crossings that are seen to impede traffic flow in Calne. Cutting through the village can shorten some journeys drastically on busy mornings but the impact of town planning measures, which may be seen as appropriate by the planners, have a disastrous impact on surrounding villages and the road through Compton Bassett was not envisaged to funnel 1000 cars a day onto the A4 and beyond. The snapshot statistics recorded by the SpeedWatch team supplemented by the ongoing recording from the SID illustrate that traffic flow through the village is increasing year on year.

In the coming months the Parish Council will be continuing to adopt some more calming measures suggested by the traffic management consultant employed in 2020. These will include presenting the village as a nature corridor and conservation area with signage and rural gating at each end of the parish presenting Compton Bassett as a rural idyll rather than a race circuit. It may not be able to improve numbers of cars seeking to use the village as a short cut but hopefully it will affect driving style and reduce speed, as has been the case in other villages who have adopted this approach.

Julian Barlow



The next traffic calming measure will be the siting of a new Speed Indicator Device (SID) in the new 30 mph zone. Unlike the current SID the new device will also photograph offenders who break the speed limit.

However from recent activity on social media it is apparent that not everyone is a fan of traffic calming measures. There was a flurry of negative and abusive messages on Facebook® recently when Calne Police shared some images of the Compton Bassett SpeedWatch team monitoring the speed and flow of traffic through the village.

Here comes the rain again?

Those of you of a certain age will recall the Eurhythmics 1983 ballad Here Comes the Rain Again. This could well have been adopted as the anthem of choice by many of us living in Compton Bassett over the past 6 months. The village has been flooded on at least six occasions where an abundance of water has both fallen from the sky, run off the surrounding fields or filled gullies and drains, spilling across the roads, paths, flooding gardens, garages and in some cases houses.

In the case of one deluge at the start of January 2024, over a 3-hour period, more rain water poured onto the village than had fallen in the previous few months combined. It was like sitting under a power shower from the heavens and led to water ingress in several properties in different parts of Compton Bassett with residents literally counting the cost of soggy carpets and damp furniture. Older residents commented it was the worst flood experienced in the past 30 years of living in the village.

One of the reasons the water impact was so severe came about due to the poor drainage and verge maintenance throughout the village. This is the responsibility of Wessex Water and Wiltshire Highways and so both have been contacted by CBPC to review options for improving the situation as there is a sense, that due to climate change, it is likely we are going to suffer from more rather than less incidents of this type.

Councillor Ashley O'Neill and Highways Engineer Becky Chivers were invited to attend the Parish Council to discuss ideas for improvement and review the issues affecting the village. Sadly the output was not positive. On some occasions water runs off the surrounding fields and is supposed to be piped away from the village crossing under roads. However, the diameter of pipes is simply too narrow for the volume of water we experienced in the January downpour. To replace pipes is costly, and involves road closures and highways engineering evaluations. We are told that Compton Bassett is one of literally scores of villages in the county with the same issue. There is apparently no budget from central government and a much depleted fund available to the Highways unit at Wiltshire Council, which is earmarked for "higher priority" items. There is a sandbags hotline, available for council tax payers but this needs to be contacted 24 hours before flooding occurs. The clue as to why this is not really a very helpful or useful option is in the term "flash flood" – where a sudden and unexpected flooding "flash" event occurs suddenly – not with 24 hours' notice so you can put in an order for sandbags.

We will continue to apply pressure to Becky and her team and since coming into post she has been both sympathetic and pro-active in helping with village related highway issues, so if there is a route through to assisting us, we are sure she will do her utmost to help. Meanwhile, the Parish Steward (see article p4) will be continuing to maintain and unblock verges and gullies where appropriate. There is now a flood contingency section of the villages emergency plan with contact points should you feel concerned if your property is threatened. This is available in the Parish Council section of the village website.

www.comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk/

Julian Barlow



These sudden flash flood events are certainly becoming more regular and quickly overwhelm the drainage.

Saving the Tree Sparrows in Compton

Tree Sparrow numbers have crashed nationally. However, they can still be found breeding in good numbers across the North Wessex Downs. The Bremhill Vale Farm Cluster group (of which the Manor Farm in Compton Bassett is a member) lies on the doorstep of this population and was once home to these fascinating little birds.



The Tree Sparrow is a year round resident

Slightly smaller than the much commoner House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), the Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) has a chestnut-brown head and black spot in the white cheek for easy identification. UK population is barely 200,000 compared with the House Sparrow's 5.3 million pairs but both species have suffered a dramatic decline: the House Sparrow has dropped by 71% and the Tree Sparrow by 93% between 1970 and 2008. While House Sparrow numbers continue to fall, the Tree Sparrow has at least managed to recover from the brink with numbers doubling in the last decade. Nevertheless, they remain on the Red endangered list and help is needed to secure their status.



North Wessex Downs National Landscape and Wiltshire Ornithological Society have obtained funding for a project, of which Compton Bassett Parish Council has contributed £200.



Arable farmland is the Tree Sparrow's favoured habitat

The core aim of the work is to try to expand the range of Tree Sparrows locally by providing suitable sites for them to colonise and form breeding colonies. This has included installing seven nesting boxes and providing feeders for supplementary feeding. Jonny Cooper from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has installed the boxes and is monitoring the site regularly. We look forward to updating the parish in due course.

Charles Reis

We are delighted Jonny Cooper is coming to the Annual Community Meeting on Wednesday 15th May 2024 at the Benson Hall 7pm, to talk about Saving the Tree Sparrow.

Growing up on a farm just outside Sutton Benger, Jonny has always been interested in birds and nature. Much of his time both in and out of work is now spent engaging with landowners across the county, working alongside them to protect and conserve some Wiltshire's rarest and most important bird species. The Bremhill Vale Farm Cluster lies on the doorstep of the North Wessex Downs population and was once home to these fascinating little birds. This talk will explore what we are doing to help restore the Tree Sparrow to its former haunts.

After the talk we'll have refreshments and a chat. It's free entry and a good opportunity to mingle with neighbours and discuss the issues. Please come and join us!

Parish Stewards – what do they do?



Most months our parish gets a visit from the Parish Steward. These are unsung heroes employed by Wiltshire and are a kind of one stop shop for helping the village deal with smaller issues affecting access, drainage, small highway repairs. The type of work varies from month to month depending on requirements.

In the early months of the year there is often an increasing focus on potholes and the need to deal with damaged road surfaces. In the autumn keeping drains and culverts clear is a priority. In the winter the Parish Stewards are often involved gritting the roads and other winter maintenance operations.

Here are some of things they do to help:

Planned works

Typical planned local highway work undertaken by Parish Stewards includes (but is not exclusive to):

- Hand clearing and cutting of growth from drainage grips and drain gully covers
- Hand clearing of blocked gullies
- Rodding of drainage systems
- Clearing of small culverts, pipes, and pits
- Clearing storm debris
- Trimming encroaching hedges and vegetation from around road signs and railings
- Cleaning and straightening small road signs
- Hand cutting small visibility areas
- Reactive emergency repairs, including pothole repairs (In accordance with Wiltshire Councils Highways Inspection Manual)
- Find, fix and record potholes
- Responding to road closure requests from the emergency services
- Removal of ragwort (hand pulling or strimming of defined areas)
- Treatment/removal of weeds
- Clearance of debris and materials from scenes of road traffic collisions including clinical waste
- Siding out of footways and carriageways
- Clearance of small fallen trees or minor overhanging branches/limbs.

Emergency works

Examples of types of emergency reactive local highway work undertaken by Parish Stewards includes (but is not exclusive to):

- Resolving flooding issues – clearing drainage grips and drain gully covers, clearing of small culverts, pipes, and pits etc
- Placing emergency signage and traffic management
- Clearing structures and fixings and making them safe
- Reactive pothole repair
- Responding to road closure requests from the emergency services
- Small masonry type works, such as repairs to slabs and damaged kerbs
- Clearance of debris and materials from scenes of road traffic collisions, including clinical waste
- Clearance of storm-damaged trees from the highway, including the use of a chainsaw (where this work is extensive, further support may be required).

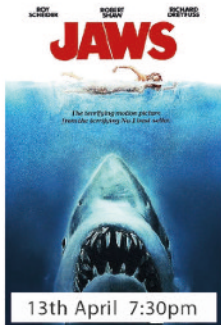
If you have an issue associated with any of these please get in touch with our Parish Clerk parishclerk@comptonbassettparishcouncil.gov.uk who will approach Peter Barnett, the parish councillor responsible for parish steward liaison, to get the works programmed in.

One caveat – the works undertaken are small scale - so potholes and road patching which are a constant and irksome worry for the area are likely to be an issue from Wiltshire Highways rather than the Parish Steward – who can patch small areas – say the size of a dinner plate but not undertake a major road restoration.

COMPTON BASSETT NOTICEBOARD

BENSON HALL

The Community Venue of Compton Bassett



13th April 7:30pm



Friday 3rd May
6 Games + Cashbuilder £5
FREE ENTRY
Bar Opens at 7pm | Fines Down 7.30



9th May 7:30pm

To find out more or book tickets online scan the QR code or visit

www.bensonhall.online/events



10th May 7:30pm



Performed at Compton Bassett Benson Hall
Friday 17 & Saturday 18 May
Doors Open 7:00PM | Curtain Up 7:30PM
Licensed by
www.bensonhallonline.com
Tel: 01262 875400



D-Day 80 Years on...
6th June 7:30pm

First of all I'd like to say thank you to all of you who have been able to attend some of our events since we installed our 'Big Screen' at Benson Hall late last year.

As a community venue we want to be able to give everyone in the village, and beyond, a reason to visit the hall and the addition of a 165" Ultra HD, 4K Cinema set up with full Dolby Atmos now allows us to show not only films, live sporting events and concerts, but also means we are the only village hall in Wiltshire licensed to screen plays direct from National Theatre Live.

If you've not been to one of our screenings or events then I'd ask that you find time to attend just one and, like many others, discover this amazing audio-visual experience, right on your doorstep!

I hope to see you soon!

Paul Rossiter, Chair of Trustees



THE WHITE HORSE INN

What's On at The White Horse...



As the sun sets and the evening unfolds, there's a certain allure to sinking your teeth into a juicy, perfectly crafted burger. Join us EVERY Wednesday from 6pm for a burger & a drink for £18.



Join us every Sunday for a Roast, served from 12pm. With the weather getting better, our garden is a great spot to soak up the sun with a pint & a roast!

Take a moment in the middle of the day to indulge in our set menu, Monday to Friday, from 12pm, 2 courses for £17.50, 3 courses for £22.50. The menu changes on a regular basis and is ran alongside our main menu.



Looking for a space to host an event? Look no further! Our pub offers a fantastic event space that's perfect for gatherings of all kinds. Birthdays, Corporate Events, Reunion, Special Occasion, Community Events or Yoga.



Selling off the family jewels



Once known as the Armada Jewel as it was thought to be associated with the attempted Spanish invasion, it is now more correctly termed the Heneage Jewel. The front depicts Queen Elizabeth in profile, the reverse shows an image of an ark amidst a storm. Inside, a miniature of the Queen by Nicholas Hilliard. The back of the locket displays a Tudor rose and an inscription. Victoria & Albert Museum.

At Christie's London auction room on 11 July 1902 a rare Elizabethan enamelled gold locket, encrusted with diamonds and Burmese rubies was sold anonymously in an exciting competition between two very determined bidders, a Mr Hodgkins and Mr Duveen. Ultimately, it was won by Mr Hodgkins for 5,000 guineas, or around £800,000 at 2024 value. He bought it on behalf of American financier, John Pierpont Morgan, to become part of his immense collection of art, which over 23 years amounted to over 20,000 objects from around the world. The locket was catalogued in 1906 by George Williamson, as part of the *Catalogue of the Collection of Miniatures - The Property of J. Pierpont Morgan* in four volumes 1906–1908. Just 20 copies were printed in a private publication. After its sale it was not heard of again for 33 years, at which point it was revealed for the first time that Compton Bassett was a major factor behind its original sale.

The oval locket, measuring 70mm x 51mm, was made for Queen Elizabeth I in around 1595 by goldsmith Nicholas Hilliard. On the front is the Queen in profile bust looking stern and regal in gold relief over blue enamel. This is covered by rock crystal and surrounded by rubies and diamonds. The reverse side shows an image of a ship sailing peacefully on stormy seas, bearing the motto "Calm amidst the raging seas". On opening the back cover, inside the lid a Tudor red rose encircled with leaves is depicted with the complimentary inscription "Alas, that virtue

inviolat, with so great honour decked, hath not eternal length of day". Facing the rose is a more intimate portrait of the Queen looking youthful and radiant. The symbolism expresses that regality and beauty cannot last forever, and also a devotion and personal favour to the recipient of the pendant.

It was a gift from Elizabeth to her Privy Counsellor and Vice-Chamberlain, about whom she would not hear a bad word said (especially when wearing his gift of a pearl earring). The glorious pendant is considered to be one of the finest jewels from the reign of Elizabeth and was among the greatest treasures in the Pierpont Morgan collection in New York. So, who was the admired courtier of Elizabeth I? Step forward one Sir Thomas Heneage, a faithful servant to, and much loved by, the Queen.

He fared better in royal service than his uncle, also Sir Thomas, who had the dubious honour of being Groom of the Stool, providing King Henry VIII with a flannel "to wipe his nether end". The King suffered from chronic constipation and this Thomas was an unfortunate witness to the various attempts to relieve the problem. However, Younger Thomas experienced a rapid rise in favour within the royal court of Elizabeth; so much so that Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, became jealous of his influence on the Queen and relations in court had to be patched up.

Heneage Jewel continued...

After Thomas died in 1595, at the age of 63, the cherished locket was conscientiously handed down through generations of the Heneage family until November 1901 when, following the sudden death of his father, Godfrey Walker-Heneage inherited the locket along with the vast family estates.



Godfrey Walker-Heneage 1868–1939

At the time, Godfrey was a serving officer in the Grenadier Guards fighting in the Boer War. He briefly moved into the country seat in Compton Bassett but, after marrying Dorothy Helyar two months later, they decided to decamp to her Coker Court estate in Somerset which she had inherited in 1893. With farms and land amounting to well over 7,000 acres, scores of properties in Wiltshire and a family house in Mayfair, there was plenty of wealth for Walker-Heneage. But he was now faced with a disagreeable problem and one which had to be solved without delay: crippling death duties.

Since 1896 new inheritance tax laws had come into effect. Estate duty was applied to all property and possessions at their market value at the time of death. If this was greater than £150,000 then a rate of 6.5% was exercised, amounting to around £10,000 which equates to

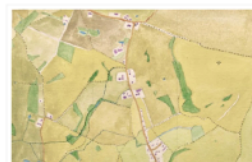
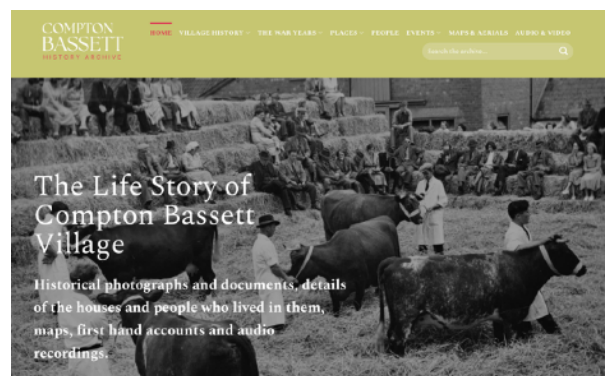
roughly £1.5 million now in 2024. The situation faced by Walker-Heneage was conceivably much greater than this and it is possible that other exotic items offered in the Christie's sale that day also belonged to him. Godfrey would have agonised about the prospect of giving away the prized and honoured family jewel, especially one that had been in their custody for so long. But by July of that year, it was at Christie's and from there spirited away into the private collection of a New York banker. It must have distressed him that he had been the one to relinquish the jewel, (though his anonymity was retained until a few years before his death, in 1939, when it was up for sale again on 24 June 1935 and the original seller's name was disclosed).

This time the locket was dramatically snapped up at another Christie's auction by the National Art Collections Fund which reclaimed it for Britain. Viscount Wakefield, a significant philanthropist, and the man behind Castrol oil, learned of the sale and magnanimously reimbursed the full purchase amount, presenting it to the Victoria and Albert Museum through the Art Fund. The price was £2,835 - considerably less than its sale value in 1902.

The name Armada Jewel is probably a misnomer as it is thought to have been made several years after the attempted invasion of England. In addition, the ship shown on its cover is more correctly interpreted as the Ark of the English church, a haven of peace amidst the 'stormy waters' of external interference. Today it is termed the Heneage Jewel and is one of the prize exhibits in the Jewellery Gallery at the V&A museum in London.

Laurie Waite

The Compton Bassett History website is close to being released. The parish council will then assume responsibility for its future upkeep.



Compton Bassett lies within the county of Wiltshire in England and was recorded in Domesday Book of 1086. The village is dispersed along a two-mile road that meanders along at the feet of the Marlborough Downs escarpment. First designated as a Conservation Area in 1991, it is also part of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The village shop and post office have gone but the church, inn and village hall are integral components for a community of 266 people. Farming and agriculture remain an important aspect of village life.

Village gateways for the parish

Now that we have the extended speed restrictions in place and with associated signage, we are able to go ahead and obtain village gateways at the entry points to the parish.

There are a few ideas for the type of display and information to go on the gates and three are shown below. The gateways are made from white recycled plastic and along with the village name, can also carry additional text, such as the usual “Welcome to...Please drive carefully”, or “Welcome to...A Domesday village”, or Welcome to...A Conservation Status village”.



Three examples for illustration purposes; the two at left show an integrated gate, speed roundel and village name.



The existing poles and speed roundels at the village entry points, to be replaced.

Always contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance please

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