

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

Newton Surmaville

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*Newton Surmaville*

Name: Newton Surmaville

County: Somerset

District: South Somerset (District Authority)

Parish: Barwick and Stoford

County: Somerset

District: South Somerset (District Authority)

Parish: Yeovil

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.935395  
Longitude: -2.6172785  
National Grid Reference: ST 56721 15287  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001153  
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984  
Date of most recent amendment: 17-Jun-2014  
Statutory Address 1: Newton Surmaville, Newton Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2RX

## Historique de la conservation

In the early C13, Newton Surmaville was in the possession of the de Salmonville family, from which the estate derives its name (CL, 1952). The estate descended through the de Salmonville's female descendants until 1510 when John Burnell sold it to John Compton. The property was again sold in 1608 when it was acquired by Robert Harbin (b 1526), a wealthy mercer from Blandford Forum, Dorset. Despite his advanced years, Harbin proceeded to demolish the existing house and build a new mansion which was completed in 1612. Robert Harbin died in 1621 and was succeeded by his son John, who served as High Sheriff of Dorset in 1623. The estate suffered from fines during the Commonwealth, but continued in the Harbin family. In the early C18, Wyndham Harbin (d 1741) kept a diary which records work in the garden including planting apple trees and asparagus beds (CL, 1952). Wyndham Harbin's son, Swayne, constructed a summerhouse on the summit of Newton Hill, now Summer House Hill, in the mid-C18, benefiting from extensive southerly views across Barwick Park (qv). Swayne Harbin (d 1780) was probably also responsible for planting the hillside between the house and summerhouse. Swayne Harbin's son, Wyndham, made Newton Surmaville over to his widowed mother until her death in 1809. Between 1809 and 1823 the house was unoccupied, although Wyndham Harbin passed control of the estate to his nephew, George Harbin, who occupied the house until his death in 1880, undertaking a scheme of restoration and improvement in the 1860s and 1870s (CL, 1952). George Harbin was also responsible for ensuring that the track for the Yeovil Branch of the London and South Western Railway was laid on the farther, Dorset, bank of the River Yeo, thus preventing intrusion within the park. George Harbin's widow occupied

the house until 1898 when it passed to an elderly nephew, Henry Harbin, who died in 1909. The estate was inherited by Henry Harbin's nephew, the Revd Edward Bates, who took the name Harbin and moved to the estate from nearby Puckington where he was Prebendary of Wells Cathedral. With his wife, Hilda, the Revd Bates Harbin developed the gardens around the house in the early years of the C20. He died in 1918, but the estate continued to be occupied by his widow and she was responsible for further development of the gardens up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. A small area of park was developed as part of the Yeovil Golf Club course in the mid-C20. Mrs Bates Harbin died in 1962, and the house was inherited by her daughter Sophie Rawlins (nee Sophie Bates Wyndham Harbin). The current owners purchased the house in 2007, and today (2014) the site remains in divided ownership.

## Details

C19 and early-C20 gardens developed within a mid-C18 landscape surrounding an early-C17 house.

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING:** Newton Surmaville is situated on the south-eastern edge of Yeovil, in the valley of the River Yeo. The c 60ha site comprises some 3ha of gardens and pleasure grounds, and c 57ha of park and ornamental plantations. To the north-east the site is bounded by the late-C19 railway track of the Yeovil Branch of the London and South Western Railway and the main line itself. To the east, south and west the site adjoins agricultural land from which it is separated by a variety of hedges and fences, while to the north-west it adjoins an area of woodland. A minor road, Newton Road, leading from Yeovil to Yeovil Junction Station and Stowford passes from north to south through the site to the west of the house, while the River Yeo flows from south-east to north through the site to the east of the house. The site comprises level ground adjacent to the river, and steeply-rising slopes on the east bank of the river, and to the west and south-west of the house. The site rises to a summit at Summer House Hill marked by the summerhouse, now known as The Round House, c 270m west of the house. There are extensive views in all directions from The Round House, while at the lower levels of the site there are significant views south-east and north along the valley of the River Yeo, which forms the boundary between Somerset and Dorset and the parishes of Barwick and Bradford Abbas.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES:** Newton Surmaville is approached from Newton Road to the north-west at a point c 130m south-south-east of the bridge carrying Newton Road over a disused railway line. The C19 driveway, probably installed by George Harbin comprises a C19 painted timber gate supported by a pair of ashlar piers with pyramidal caps. Similar timber pedestrian gates are placed to the east and west of the carriage entrance. Beyond the entrance a tarmac, tree-lined drive leads c 320m south-south-east, bordered to the west by woodland and areas of pasture planted with groups of specimen trees. To the east the drive was separated from the park by C19 metal estate fencing, now (2014) removed. Some 100m north-north-west of the house the drive divides, with one branch sweeping south-east and south to enter the pleasure grounds c 40m north of the house at a point marked by a pair of C18 square ashlar piers surmounted by urn finials (listed Grade II). The western branch of the drive extends 10m south before dividing again, with a west branch sweeping round the west side of the house and kitchen garden to reach Newton Farm. The principal drive continues south, entering the pleasure grounds between a similar pair of C18 ashlar piers (listed Grade II), before extending south to reach a carriage turn below the north facade of the house. The pairs of C18 gate piers are not depicted in historic paintings of the house and they may have been relocated from elsewhere, perhaps in the mid-C19 when the drive was installed by George Harbin. The north drive appears to be little altered from that shown on the Tithe map (1842).

A further entrance is situated on Newton Road c 450m south of the house at a point c 100m north of the junction of Newton Road and Two Tower Lane. A tarmac drive sweeps east and north-east through an avenue of mature limes before turning sharply west to approach Newton Farm. The drive continues north-west beyond the farm, and after c 50m divides with one branch leading west and north-west to join Newton Road c 160m south-west of the house, while the other branch continues north-west, passing to the west of the kitchen garden and house to join the north drive c 50m north-north-west of the house. The complex of drives serving the farm to the south and south-west of the house does not appear to be shown on the Tithe map

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(1842), but is little changed from the arrangement shown on the early-C20 Ordnance Survey maps (OS, 1930). It is likely that these drives were formed in the mid-C19 as part of the improvements made by George Harbin (d 1880).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING:** Newton Surmaville, also known as Newton House (listed Grade I), constructed in 1608-12 by Robert Harbin, stands on an artificially-levelled terrace slightly above the flood plain of the River Yeo towards the centre of the site. The house comprises two storeys and an attic, and is constructed of Ham stone with ashlar dressings under principally pitched slate roofs, and is lit by mullion and transom windows. The entrance façade (north) has a symmetrical composition with three full-height gables and a pair of two-storey square bays surmounted by balustrades and obelisk finials. The north-west bay contains the principal entrance. The other facades are less regular in style, but have similar gables with tall stone chimney stacks and obelisk finials. To the south a paved courtyard separates the house from the C19 stables, service buildings and kitchen garden. The house is believed to have been influenced by nearby Montacute House (qv). In the mid-C19 George Harbin commissioned the Yeovil architect, Joseph N Johnstone to make a number of alterations to the house, which created the courtyard to the centre of the building and the south range. The most significant of these alterations comprised the formation of a first-floor library at the south-east corner of the house, lit by an oriel window. An adjacent contemporary external staircase was constructed to allow George Harbin private access to the gardens (CL, 1952).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS:** the gardens and pleasure grounds are situated principally to the north, east and south of the house. To the north an area of lawn was separated from the park to the north and north-east by C19 metal estate fencing (now removed). A grid of young yew and lime trees has now (2014) been planted in the forecourt to the north of the house. The lawns are planted with scattered specimen trees and conifers dating principally from the late C19 and early C20. This area was developed in the mid-C19, following the demolition of the C17 or C18 stables which stood to the north-east of the house (pers comm Mrs Wyndham Rawlins). Some 80m east of the house an approximately rectangular pond forms the focal point of the early and mid-C20 gardens. This pond formed one of a series of five ponds which extended south-east from the house through the orchards. Of C17 or earlier origin, the other four ponds were filled in during the mid-C19 improvements undertaken by George Harbin (CL, 1952; pers comm Mrs Wyndham Rawlins). The rectangular pond and its west and east bank has been replanted, and the pond to the south-east re-opened. A new, 12 metre, bridge has been erected across the centre of the rectangular pond providing access to the pleasure gardens to the west which have been re-planted and re-laid and the walkways paved with stone chippings. The stone-paved walkway to the west that continued round the southern end of the pond and along the eastern bank has been turfed. These pleasure gardens were initially developed by the Revd and Mrs Bates Harbin between 1909 and 1918, while the area to the east of the pond was particularly developed by Mrs Bates Harbin in the 1920s and 1930s on land which had previously formed part of the C18 orchards. This area, which contained herbaceous and rose borders, together with espalier apple trees (pers comm Mrs Wyndham Rawlins; Bond, 1998) has been replanted with young trees to its outer borders; the C19 wellingtonia tree to the east border remains. There is an orchard of apple trees to the south and south-east of the ponds.

**THE PARK:** the park is situated principally to the north, north-east and south of the house. The area to the north, comprising the flood plain of the River Yeo, remains pasture with scattered specimen trees. To the east of the River Yeo part of the park has been included in the Yeovil Golf Club's course, while groups of mature trees to the north and north-east screen the C19 railway line which forms the boundary of the park. Situated on the western bank of the River Yeo c 100m north-north-east of the house are the remains of the lower section of a C19 boathouse: the walls and roof no longer survive. The north park corresponds to the area shown on the Tithe map (1842), and the early C20 OS map (OS, 1930). An avenue of young trees has been planted to the east of the house. To the south of the avenue is an early C20 circular pond. The C19 deer fencing to the south has been removed. The park to the south of the house occupies steep east and north-east facing slopes below Newton Road. These areas are in mixed agricultural cultivation and retain few parkland trees. A mixed plantation extends through the southern park, continuing the block of woodland to the west of Newton Road, Newton Copse, into the park. The disposition of park and woodland to the south of the house corresponds to that shown on the Tithe map (1842).

The park is bounded to the west by Newton Copse, an area of mixed woodland planted on the steep, east-facing slope above, and immediately below Newton Road. A track ascends through the wood to reach the mid-C18 summerhouse, The Round House

(listed Grade II) which stands on the summit of Summer House Hill. The stone, classical-style building comprises a central, two-storey octagonal pavilion under a pyramidal roof, flanked by a pair of two-storey wings. Constructed by Swayne Harbin in 1745 (Bond, 1998), the summerhouse is said to have been one of three follies erected by a group of friends, each intended to be visible from the others which were situated at Montacute (qv) and Chilton Cantelo (CL, 1952). To the south, the summerhouse overlooks Barwick Park (qv) and its group of C18 follies which lies immediately south of Two Tower Lane. The summerhouse, known as The Round House, has been converted to domestic use since at least 2002.

**KITCHEN GARDEN:** the kitchen garden is situated immediately south of the house. Rectangular on plan, the garden is enclosed by coped stone walls c 3m high, and is adjoined to the south by the Gardener's Cottage (listed Grade II) and the stables (listed Grade II). A bothy stands against the wall at the south-east corner of the garden, and there are restored glasshouses (2009 and 2013) against the inner face of the eastern and northern wall. The kitchen garden has been returned to cultivation (2014). The kitchen garden, together with the Gardener's Cottage and the stables were constructed in the mid-C19 as part of George Harbin's scheme of improvements.

A further area of productive gardens is situated to the east of the walled garden, and immediately west of the pond in the pleasure grounds. This was developed in the late C19 or early C20 (pers comm Mrs Wyndham Rawlins) but has been re-planted in the early-C21. To the east of the stables and Gardener's Cottage are a series of enclosures planted with mature standard fruit trees corresponding to the orchards shown on the Tithe map (1842) and the later OS (OS, 1930). The home farm, Newton Farm, adjoins the orchards to the south-east. The complex of buildings includes the C17 and C18 farmhouse (listed Grade II) which was re-fronted and altered in the mid-C19 and a late-C18 barn incorporating an unaltered C19 engine house (listed Grade II).

## Summary

C19 and early-C20 gardens developed within a mid-C18 landscape surrounding an early-C17 house.

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.

## Reasons for Designation

Newton Surmaville is included on the Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Historic interest: it is a representative example of a C19 and early C20 garden and pleasure ground set within a mid-C18 landscape, which together form a site with a longstanding gardening tradition; \* Intactness: despite the fact that a small area of the park was developed as a golf course in the mid-C20 and the restoration of the garden in the early C21 which has included some new planting, its overall layout and boundaries have survived intact; \* Group Value: it contributes to the exceptional interest of the early C17 Newton House (listed at Grade I) which stands at its heart and together with the other landscape features and buildings within the park forms an important group of heritage assets. Additionally, it forms an interesting group with the adjacent Barwick Park (Registered at Grade II\*) a late C18 landscape with a number of follies which form the focus for intentional views from Newton Surmaville.

## Bibliographie

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