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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BARWICK PARK

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Name:	BARWICK PARK
County:	Somerset
District:	South Somerset (District Authority)
Parish:	Barwick and Stoford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.914592 Longitude: -2.6280274 National Grid Reference: ST 55946 12980, ST5616514375 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000411 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Late C18 pleasure grounds and a park with a collection of associated follies.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The historic development of Barwick Park is poorly documented. The core of the present mansion, known as Barwick House, appears to have been built c 1770 by John and Grace Newman, whose relations owned neighbouring Newton Surmaville (qv). The estate had originally formed part of the property of Syon Abbey and passed through various hands after the Dissolution in the 1530s. Newman's late C18 mansion was set in pleasure grounds containing a lake and grotto, while the surrounding parkland was ornamented with a gothic lodge and a group of four follies. These structures are shown in the backgrounds of a series of Newman family portraits painted c 1770-80 (Jones 1974). In the early C19 the estate passed to a Yeovil glove manufacturer, George Messiter, and c 1830 the mansion was remodelled in a Jacobean Revival style. An orangery was constructed adjoining the north side at the same period. During the C20 the estate again passed through several hands, and for a period in the mid C20 the mansion was used as an approved school. At this time the pleasure grounds became neglected and the orangery fell into disrepair; the follies in the park also suffered from neglect and vandalism. In the late C20 the estate was sold to a private owner, and substantial repairs were carried out to the House, orangery, and landscape structures. The site remains (2002) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Barwick Park is situated c 1.5km south-east of Yeovil, to the east of the A37 road. The c 60ha site includes the Obelisk c 1.3km south of the House as an outlier, and is bounded to the north by a minor road, Two Tower Lane, to the east by a track known as Long Lane, and to the south and west by agricultural land and Yeovil football ground. The site slopes from north to south, with a stream, dammed to form a small lake, running from north-west to south-south-east through a shallow valley immediately south of the House. To the south of Barwick village, c 750m south of the House, the ground rises to a ridge which partly encloses southerly views from the park. There are extensive views from the high ground in the park to the north of the House, while the mid C18 Round House or Summer House (listed

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grade II) associated with Newton Surmaville (qv) situated on high ground c 500m north of Barwick Park acts as an eyecatcher from the Obelisk and high ground to the south of Barwick Park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Barwick Park is approached from Two Tower Lane to the north-west, at a point c 200m east of the junction of Two Tower Lane and the A37 road. The entrance comprises a pair of late C20 wrought-iron gates bearing the inscription 'Barwick Park', which are supported by a pair of late C18 or early C19 stone piers. Immediately south of the entrance stands a late C18 single-storey octagonal lodge with picturesque gothic windows. The lodge has been extensively extended to the south-east in the late C20. Beyond the entrance a tarmac drive extends c 450m south-east through an avenue of mature oaks. The drive sweeps east and south-south-east through the park to arrive at a carriage turn below the east facade of the House. A late C20 area for parking has been created to the north of the former orangery which forms a wing adjoining the north side of the House.

A further drive approaches the House from Rex's Lane (formerly Rexe's Hollow), a minor road which adjoins the south-east boundary of the park. This entrance is flanked by stone quadrant walls and a pair of late C18 stone piers under pyramid caps; a late C20 wrought-iron screen blocks the drive c 20m north-west of the entrance. The tarmac drive leads c 320m north-north-west, passing to the east of the lake, to reach the carriage turn to the east of the House.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Barwick House (listed grade II) is constructed in Ham stone ashlar under gabled slate roofs. The principal or east facade comprises two and three storeys, with a projecting central section rising to three storeys, with a further projecting central porch ornamented with open strap-work parapets and Doric corner columns. The outer bays of the facade are lit by Venetian windows, while other windows are of sash construction and are set within ornamental stonework. The facade has Dutch gables and a profusion of urn pinnacles. To the north of the House a single-storey range, constructed as an orangery, is lit by three full-height arched windows. Barwick Park appears originally to have been constructed c 1770 by John Newman, but was remodelled in a Jacobean Revival style c 1830 for George Messiter; the orangery was built at the same period. The House and orangery fell into a state of disrepair in the mid C20 and were the subject of a major restoration programme in the late C20. The orangery was converted to domestic use at this time.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds are situated principally to the east, south, and south-west of the House, with an artificial serpentine lake extending east and south c 20m south of the House, separating the pleasure grounds from the park beyond. To the east of the House an area of gently sloping lawn extending from the carriage turn to the south drive is planted with mature specimen trees and shrubs. A belt of late C20 poplars surrounds the eastern end of the lake, obscuring reciprocal views from the pleasure grounds to the park. Mature ornamental planting continues to the south of the House where grass walks lead west along the north-west bank of the lake. Some 30m south-west of the House the walk is surmounted by a rustic semicircular stone arch (listed grade II) which formed the entrance to a 'rocky ravine' leading to a grotto at the western end of the lake. The subterranean grotto (listed grade II) is constructed from rustic stonework and comprises three linked chambers. To the north a small entrance chamber has a domed roof; this leads west to a small barrel-vaulted chamber containing a pool, and south to the principal chamber which contains a central pool encircled by a walk. The walls of the principal chamber are ornamented with three niches, from two of which issue springs, while in the centre of the domed roof there is an oculus. The grotto, arch, and lake were constructed c 1770 by John and Grace Newman as part of a scheme for ornamenting the pleasure grounds and park around Barwick House.

PARK Barwick House and its associated pleasure grounds are situated slightly to the south of the central point of an undulating bowl-like park which opens towards the south. The highest boundary is to the north, formed by Two Tower Lane, and is screened by a mature hedge and groups of specimen trees. Similar planting extends along the eastern boundary of the park which is formed by Long Lane. The western and southern boundaries of the park are more open. The south-facing slope to the north of the north-west drive is today (2002) in arable cultivation, while the land to the north-east, east, south-west, and west of the House remains pasture. Both the arable land and the pasture retain scattered mature specimen trees and conifers, together with similar trees which are disposed in picturesque clumps.

Three follies are disposed within the park, each standing adjacent to a boundary and apparently marking the cardinal points of the compass. To the north, c 600m north of the House, is the Fish Tower (listed grade II), set in front of a group of mature

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ornamental trees on the Two Tower Lane boundary. This structure comprises a hollow rubble-stone column with open slits in the south face, rising from a square base with an arched opening to the north. The column is surmounted by a Ham stone ashlar capital resembling a well-head ornamented on the sides with ogee relief panels. The column was formerly surmounted by an iron cage with a fish-shaped finial or weather-vane (Headley and Meulenkamp 1999).

The Rose Tower (listed grade II) stands adjacent to the western boundary of the park at a point c 430m north-west of Barwick parish church. Constructed from rubble and Ham stone ashlar, the Rose Tower comprises a circular stone drum pierced by three gothic arched openings facing north, east, and south, above which rises a conical spire pierced by small rectangular openings and surmounted by an ashlar band and ball finial. This structure has been described as the 'most spectacular' of the Barwick Park follies (listed building description), and unique in Britain (Headley and Meulenkamp 1999).

Adjacent to the eastern or Long Lane boundary, c 270m east of Barwick House, a third folly, known as 'Jack the Treacle Eater' (listed grade II), comprises a monumental rubble-stone arch surmounted by a Ham stone ashlar circular tower with a battlemented parapet and a conical stone roof. The whole structure is surmounted by a winged lead figure of Mercury. A timber door set in the side of the tower is approached by an open rough-stone staircase ascending the shoulder of the arch. The folly is set on a stone-walled grass bastion overlooking the park and Barwick House, and is flanked by a group of mature beech trees. The popular name for the folly is said to derive from a runner who carried family messages up to London and trained on treacle (Jones 1974).

The three follies in the park appear to have been constructed by John Newman c 1770 as part of his overall scheme for the setting of Barwick House. Each folly has been the subject of extensive repair and consolidation in the late C20.

OTHER LAND Some 1.3km south of Barwick House and c 500m south of Barwick village, the Obelisk (listed grade II) stands in a small spinney immediately north of the A37 road. Constructed from local rubble stone (repointed and repaired, late C20), the Obelisk stands c 12m high and is of slender proportions rising from a square base. The flat stone set in the south face of the base but lacking an inscription (listed building description) is not visible today (2002). The Obelisk appears to be contemporary with the three follies in Barwick Park, and marks the southern boundary of the estate. It is included within the registered site as an outlier.

REFERENCES

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: South and West Somerset* (1958), p 85 B Jones, *Follies & Grottoes* (1974), pp 226-30

J Bond, *Somerset Parks and Gardens* (1998), pp 94-5 G Headley and W Meulenkamp, *Follies, Grottoes & Garden Buildings* (1999), pp 455-6

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1889 1930 edition

Description written: July 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: May 2004

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.