



NEWTON PARK

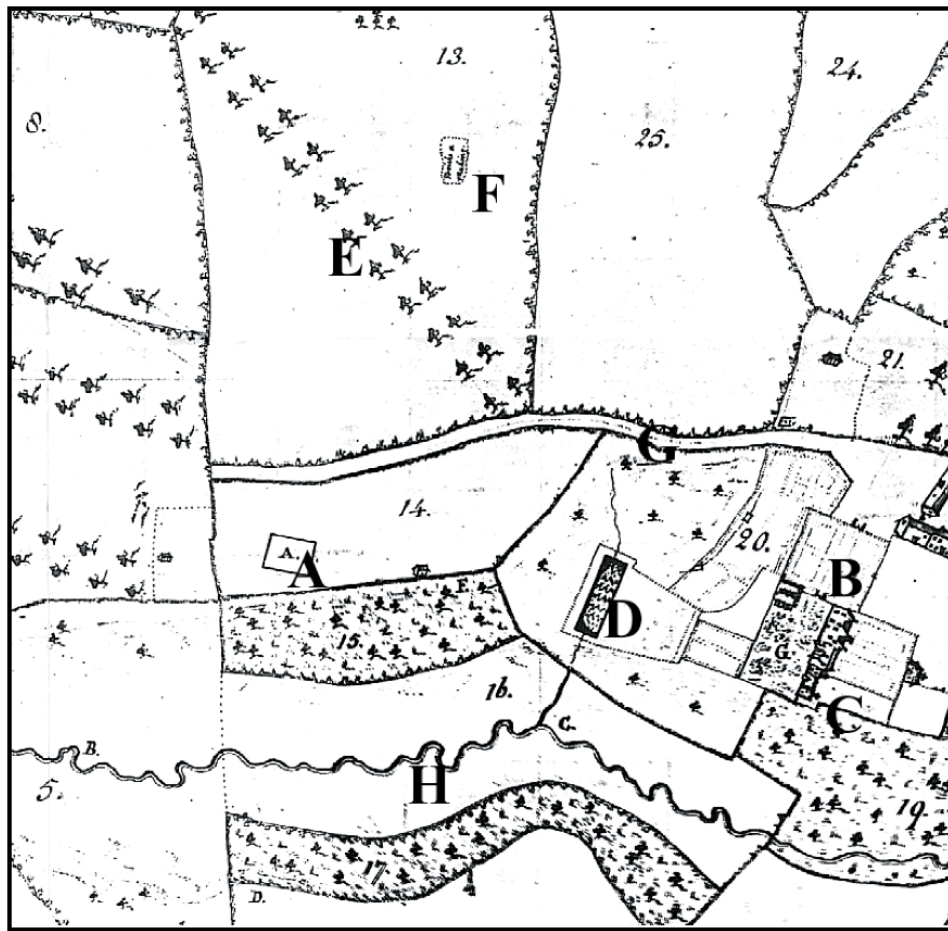
Karen King

Throughout the seventeenth century the English garden was largely influenced by European ideas; modified versions of French and Dutch gardens based on the geometric and scientific design of the Italian Renaissance and in some cases almost ‘anti nature’ in appearance. There was no recognisable native style; the long acknowledged English love of nature lay trapped among the parterres, straight lines and clipped box hedges of the formal garden. Change was long overdue; industrialisation and mechanisation rapidly brought about dramatic changes in the landscape, a desperate need to preserve England’s beauty and ‘naturalness’ ensued resulting in a backlash against the formal garden.

Geometry and science set aside the new designs took inspiration from Mother Nature, poetry and art. Eighteenth century landscapes had an appearance of natural carelessness, produced by careful selection and placing of elements to achieve balance and harmony. The landscape designers became celebrities of the era, engaged by wealthy landowners across England their designs offered a native style which went on to become regarded as quintessentially English.

The 1761 survey (see image below) taken around the time that work commenced on Newton Park confirms the intended position of the new house at A while the location of the old house can be seen at C with evidence of a formal garden and out houses. Also of particular interest is the brick making site at F offering us clear evidence that house building was underway. Corston Brook identified by the letter H was later dammed to form three lakes, the third of which has silted over.





Survey of Part of the Manor of Newton, taken by John Hinde, 1761
Image taken from the Nicholas Pearson Associates Conservation Management Plan for Newton Park, 2010.



The new house overlooking the lakes; serpentine lines and water were essential elements of the Brown landscape.




The Park, Newton Park.
Lime trees and mature oaks from the
1760s form part of today's landscape



Serving the same purpose as the old
Castle 'keep', the temple acts as an
picturesque eye-catcher.



Newton Park, 1791, Published in Collinson's
History of Somerset 1791
(Bath In Time)



Later maps demonstrate some significant changes with a new house set on the corner of an area of pleasure grounds approached via two driveways. Two major lakes set in parkland and shrubberies are visible from the house and enjoyed by means of a perimeter walk, which included picturesque eye catchers.

Viewed from the new house an area, 'The Park' was created by removing hedges and felling or relocating trees; some forming a shelter belt on the perimeter, others grouped in clumps. The ha-ha served as a boundary to keep grazing animals away from the house while providing a seamless view of a lawn that appeared to sweep out from the house to the far horizon.

In spite of a visit from Humphry Repton in 1796 and the production of a famous Red Book advocating several changes to 'improve the beautiful estate of Newton Park' it remains as an almost intact Brownian landscape bearing all the hallmarks of his design. A beautiful pastoral scene where echoes of a bygone era are still palpable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author has an MA in Landscape, Literature and Environment and a PG Cert. Garden History.

Associated links

detailed information about Newton Park:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000567>

assorted images of Newton Park (search for Newton Park): <https://www.bathintime.co.uk/>

search for people and places at:

<https://www.parksandgardens.org/>

YouTube has a number of relevant video clips; this link is from 2016 BBC documentary on Capability Brown:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3rnhSchQQk&feature=emb_rel_end

and this is a good example of a Humphry Repton red book: www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6UQyfmhv8

