

Part 5: Historical Analysis



5.1 Medieval Newton (AD1286-1539)

5.1.1 Historical Summary

The principal evidence for the town of Goathorn on Sea or Newton is to be found in two documents dated to the 14th year of the reign of Edward I. The first, dated 7 January 1286, recorded the, "Appointment of Richard de Bosco and Walter de Marisco, parson of the church of Bromesburwe, to lay out, with sufficient streets and lanes and adequate sites for a market and church, and plots for merchants and others, a new town with a harbour in a place called *Gotowre super mare*, in the parish of Stodluand and on the King's land, which was late of Robert de Muchegros and contiguous to the said place, the lands and tenements of which the said new town the King is prepared to commit to merchants and others willing to take them, and to enfeof them thereof for building and dwelling purposes" (Calendar of Patent Rolls, 2, 217). And also the "Notification that all merchants and others taking plots (*placias*) in the said land and beginning to build there, shall enjoy the same liberties and customs as the burgesses of Lyme or of Melecumbe, and that a charter to that effect shall be made" Calendar of Patent Rolls, 2, 217).

Later that same year a charter dated 10 May granted the burgesses of *Nova Villa* in Dorset all the liberties granted to the citizens of London, as set forth in the charter to Melcombe. The burgesses were also granted weekly markets on Tuesday and Friday each week and a yearly fair on the vigil and the feast of St Lawrence and the three days following (Calendar of Charter Rolls, 2, 337).

The venture to establish a town at Newton may have been an attempt to share in the prosperity of the ports of Poole Harbour. However, in common with other late town foundations, the Newtown appears to have failed, for the town

was not represented at the Assize of 1288 (Beresford 1967, 427), nor was it recorded in the subsidy or taxpaying rolls (Penn 1980). In 1326, a survey of 'The castle and chase of Corfe Castle', noted that the "rents of assizes at Newton are paid by the hands of the burgesses at Pentecost, Lammas and at Michaelmas in equal portions to the sum of 28s 6d. and there is also 9d paid by the same burgesses for placing their nets on the King's land" (Rushton 2002). The 9d owed annually from Newton burgesses for ground on which they placed their nets might have been a way of taxing them for fishing rights, as fish-nets would have had to be spread out to dry and repair; but catching wildfowl was more probably the purpose – the Middlebere tenants had to supply twenty four Widgeon to the castle every year (Hinton 2002). Later in the document it was noted that there was no separate court in Newton and that pleas were held in Corfe Castle. The sum of 28s 6d is very small for an urban settlement (about one third the value of the pasture around the Castle for example) and, as David Hinton has remarked, "the burgesses paying 9d for the privilege of laying out nets is not a normal urban activity. The place had probably become no more than just another shoreline settlement, its royal connections linking it for administrative convenience to the king's town at Corfe" (Hinton 2002, Appendix 4.2)

By the fifteenth century the name of Newton had become attached to a farm (Hutchins 1863, 653).

Weighing up the evidence for Newton, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in 1286 a few plots of the proposed new town were laid out and occupied. It never succeeded as a town but survived as a farm, with the occupiers supplementing their agricultural income with a profitable sideline in wildfowl.



Figure 6: View across Newton Bay from Newton Cottage.



Figure 7: Newton Cottage viewed from the east.

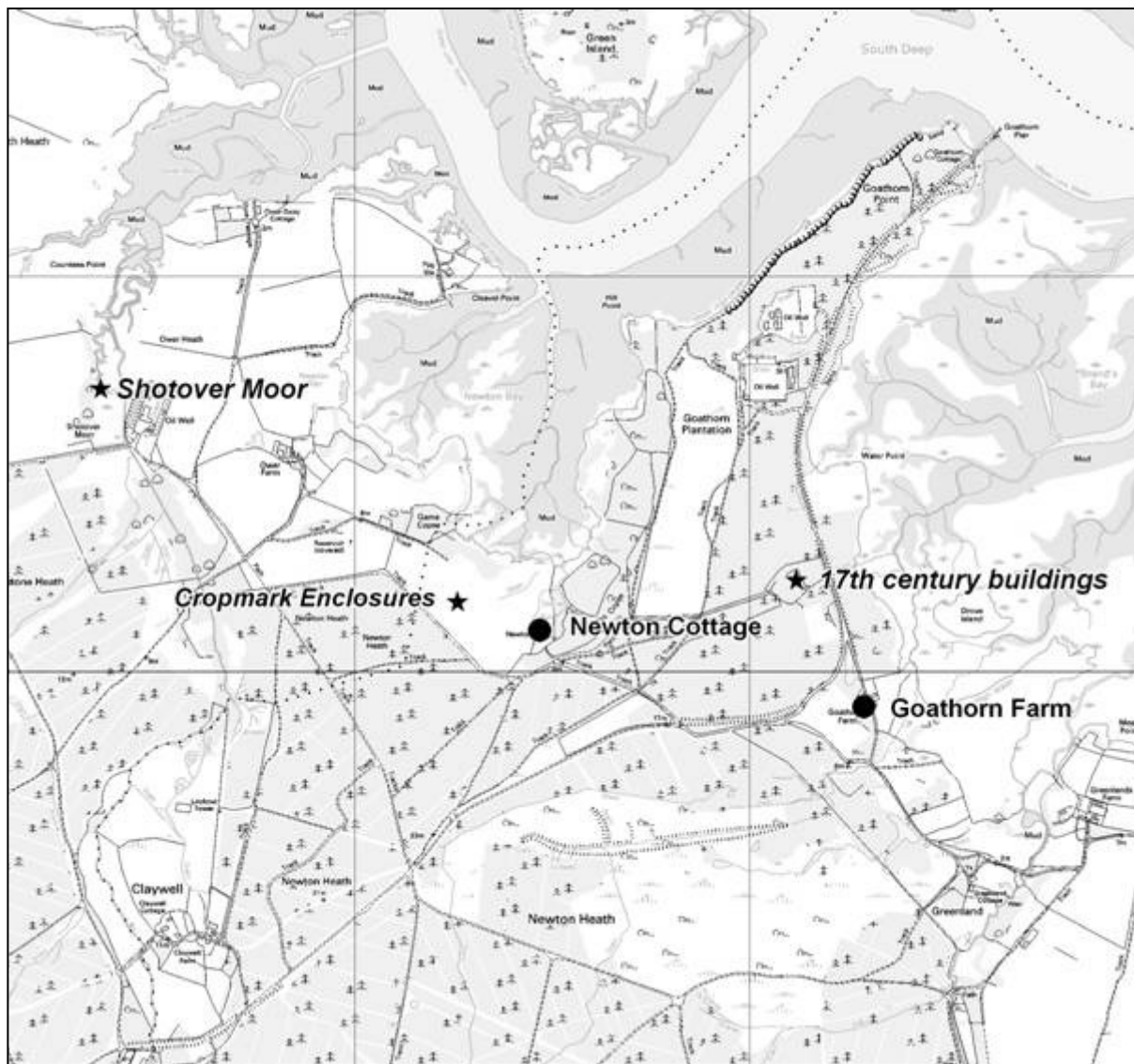


Figure 8: Map of area of Newton, showing places referred to in text.

5.1.2 Location of Newton, Studland

The charters describing the establishment of *Gotowre super mare* and the markets and fairs at *Nova Villa* were apparently unknown to Hutchins or the early historians of Poole, such as Sydenham (1839) and it was not until 1933 that James Tait both transcribed the documents and suggested that the town laid out at *Gotowre super mare* and that at *Nova Villa* were one and the same. He identified *Gotowre* with Goathorn Point which lies to the east of Newton Bay, and suggested that the town, if it ever was to be found, would be located here.

Later authors have concurred, and there has only been one serious alternative put forward, the Claywell valley, east of Newton and south of Ower, which was suggested by T C Welsh in 1998.

His argument was based on a close reading of

the original charter which, he suggested, implied that the new town was to be laid out on two adjacent pieces of land, first, '*Gotowre super mare*, in the parish of Stodlaund', and secondly 'the King's land, which was late of Robert de Muchegros'. Land belonging to 'Robert de Muscegro', had been purchased by Richard de Bosco, on behalf of the king, three years earlier. The location of this piece of land is said to have been in 'the warren of Corfe', which extended over much of the Isle of Purbeck. Based on the absence of the name 'Robert Muchegros' in any of the documents relating to a complex legal battle which was fought over the ownership of the manor of Studland, Welsh claimed that Robert Muchegros had not owned any land in the parish of Studland, and that the land which the king had purchased lay in the parish of Corfe. He then looked for a suitable location for Newton and claimed to have found it on the

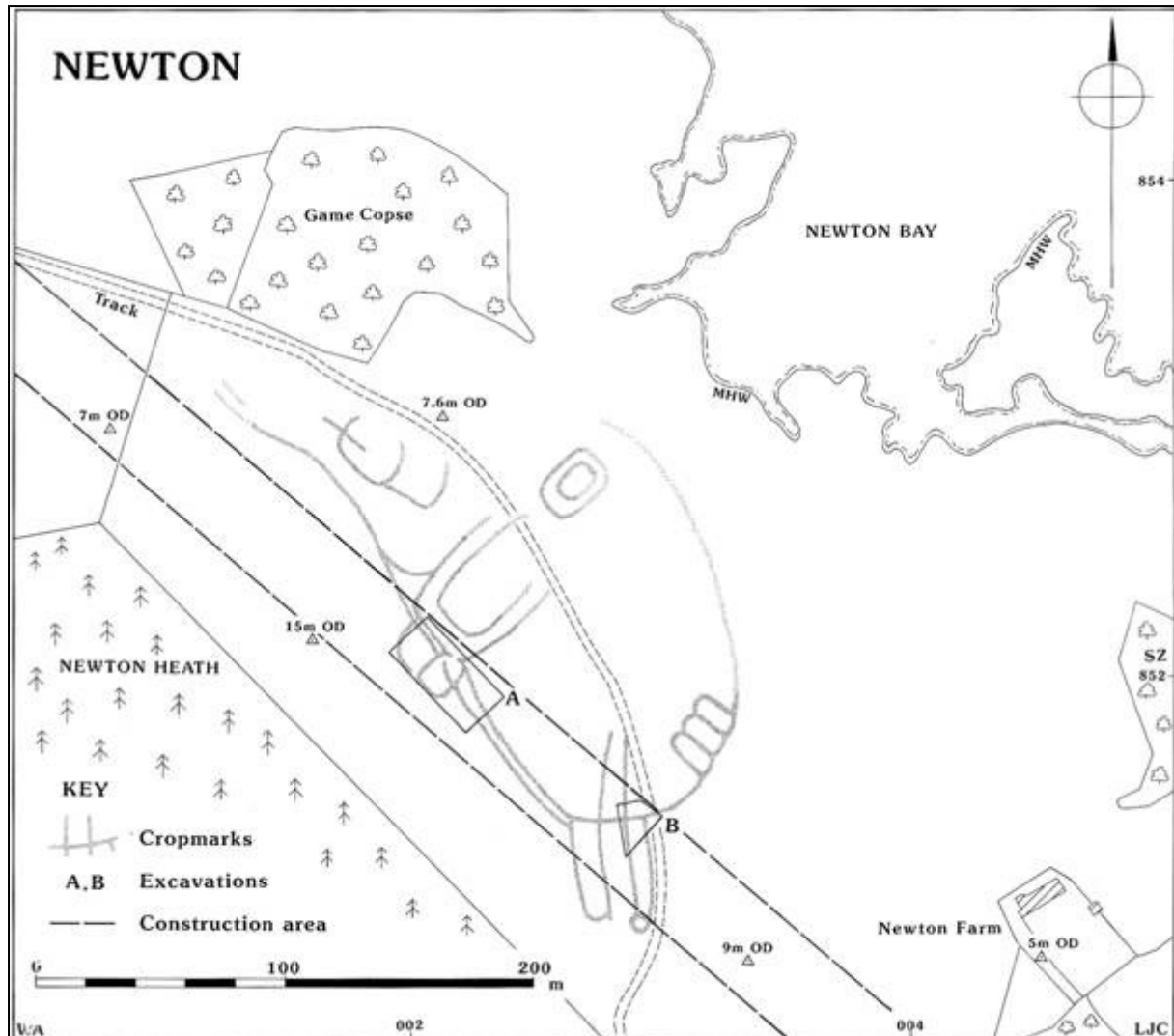


Figure 9: Plan of cropmarks east of Newton Cottage (reproduced from Cox and Hearne 1991).

Ower peninsula – “on the west side of Ower, the Claywell valley which issues into Poole Harbour via a narrow creek, might provide the location [for Newton]. Part of the valley floor is known as Shotover Moor, Shotover bearing a striking resemblance to the Gotowre of the 1286 commission and perhaps meaning corner of Ower. The appendage ‘super Mare’ may have been to distinguish it from Shottovre Forest in Oxfordshire mentioned in 1281 and 1287” (Welsh 1998).

There is one serious issue with this theory. The first mention of Shotover comes in the Rolls of Milton Abbey, which are undated but probably belong to the mid fifteenth century (Mills 1977). Shotover appears as Shottewade, however Gotoure also appears, clearly referring to Goathorn Point, and making it clear that these two place-names refer to completely different locations. The roll also identifies a road as

Nywtonyswey. Or ‘road to Newton’, suggesting that Newton was also an identifiable place in the fifteenth century.

Thus, the documentary and place-name evidence suggests that the town of Newton, Studland was probably near Goathorn, in the area where the name Newton still survives to this day. The historic county maps of Dorset of the 16th and 17th centuries often show a settlement called Newton on the south side of Poole Harbour. Unfortunately, the mapping of this part of Poole Harbour is confused and the precise location of Newton is not clear, often being shown at the west side of Newton Bay, in the position of Ower Farm (and Ower is marked in the position of Wytch Farm) (Figure 8). Isaac Taylor’s 1765 map of Dorset marks Newton to the east of Goathorn, in the area of the present Greenland’s Farm. This must surely be an error.

The 1811 First Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map shows buildings at Newton Cottage, but Newton is not mentioned by name. By the 1880s, the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map locates Newton at the clay works to the south of Goathorn Farm. So the historic maps locate Newton in roughly the same area as the place-name evidence and it is most likely that Newton on the maps refers to Newton Cottage, which has been occupied since at least the end of the 17th century.

Although there hasn't been a systematic archaeological search for the remains of the town, several archaeological investigations have taken place in the area. The first people who seemed to have searched for Newton were Maurice Beresford and J K St Joseph, who identified a group of ruins on the western side of the Goathorn Peninsula as potentially part of the lost town (Beresford and St Joseph 1958). The buildings were excavated by Bowen and Taylor in 1964, and dated to the seventeenth century. They concluded that the remains were probably nothing more than a small agricultural or fisherman's settlement. They suggested that a more likely place for the location of the town was around Newton Cottage at the end of Newton Bay.

The area around the south of Newton Bay has been investigated archaeologically in connection with the Wytch Farm oil pipeline (Cox and Hearne 1991). In 1986, a series of cropmarks and low earthworks were identified from aerial photographs, just to the northwest of Newton Cottage. The extent and form of the cropmarks suggested the presence of a large, roughly oval-shaped, ditched enclosure aligned NW – SE on its long axis, and measuring about 400m by 250m. Smaller enclosures were visible within

the main ditched outline (Figure 9). Two small areas of these cropmarks were excavated, but the results were inconclusive. Whilst the ditches were artificial and the foundations of a possible wall were recorded, there was no dating evidence recovered and no indication of any house platforms. The excavators argued on the basis of morphology alone that the "large enclosure circuit with internal minor property divisions in a suitable location for settlement supports the argument that this is the site of the failed settlement of Nova Villa" (Cox and Hearne 1991, 93).

A note of caution needs to be injected, for although the location appears suitable, the form of the features recorded is, perhaps, less so. Planned medieval towns were generally laid out on a grid pattern, unless other features, topographical or political, intervened. In the case of Newton, the land is generally level adjacent to the edge of Newton Bay (to the north of the track shown on Figure 9), but the land further south rises up steeply into a series of rounded knolls and hollows. It was this higher ground that contained the small enclosures investigated by excavation. Nevertheless, the topography is not uneven enough to preclude the town being laid out in a grid. In the absence of definite evidence, the identification of the ditches excavated by Cox & Hearne as the settlement of Newton must be considered doubtful. The land to the east of Newton Cottage at the base of the Goathorn peninsula appears rather flatter and less irregular and perhaps is a more likely place in which to lay out a town. But without further close investigation of the landscape of this area, no definite location for the town can be proposed.



Figure 10: View of area of cropmark enclosures, viewed from east.



Figure 11: View from area of cropmark enclosure eastwards towards Newton Cottage.

5.2 Post-medieval Newton (AD1540 onwards)

5.2.1 Historical Summary

By the late fifteenth century the name of Newton had become attached to a farm. Hutchins (1861, 653) describes Newton as “a small farm lying on the south shore of the estuary of Poole, about a mile east of Ower, and stretching southwards across the heath towards Currendon. It belongs to the manor and liberty of Corfe Castle, and, though it is rated to the land tax in Corfe, it pays church and poor rates to Studland. It was anciently held by a copy of court roll of the manor of Corfe by a family named Hayward, who were long resident in this parish. Thomas Hayward and other grantees from the original patron presented to the rectory of Studland in 1492. In Treswell’s rental of the manor of Corfe, 1586, John Hayward is said to hold a tenement, &c. at Newton, in the parish of Studland, together with a licence to take birds and fowl, as well as in the lord’s

commons as upon the coastal and rives of the sea there. The Poole estuary abounds in waterfowl, so that this privilege was not unimportant.”

It is interesting to note that Hutchins mentions the curious legal status of Newton in the mid eighteenth century when it belonged to Corfe but paid church and poor rates to Studland. This is undoubtedly the continuation of the situation recorded in the 1326 survey of Corfe Castle when much of the administration of Newton was carried out through Corfe Castle. Also in 1326 the burgesses of Newton paid 9d per annum for the right to place their nets on the king’s land (probably for wildfowling) and in 1586 John Hayward of Newton had a licence to take birds and fowl.

By 1840, Newton had been acquired by John Calcraft and the tenant was William Roberts (Studland Tithe Map Apportionment 1840).