

*Dr Anne Millar writes in the Benson Bulletin  
about Newton Way, named after the Newton Family*

Newton Way is a short residential road between Blacklands and Westfield roads both of which run between the Watlington Road and Brook Street. Newton was the name of a family of farmers who came to Crowmarsh Battle farm in 1792. The land near the Thames was fertile and produced good crops and high yields. The farmhouse was refurbished as were the barns and farmyard.

Thomas Newton was recognised as an enterprising farmer by Arthur Young in his review of farming in Oxfordshire in 1813. There are four panels of memorial texts on the walls of Benson Parish Church of the family, only recording their successes but not the discord engendered, in the area, by their desire to acquire more land and enclose it.

Thomas Newton, the father of the family recognised that drainage and crop rotation were part of the methods needed to produce larger yields from any land even those with a good fertile soil. Parts of Crowmarsh Battle Farm had been enclosed by the previous owner but it did not greatly disturb the number of subsistence farmers who lived within Benson Village - several in Brook Street. Enclosure required an act of Parliament. Thomas Newton applied for enclosure first in 1807, at this time he only owned 5.4% of the taxable property within the parish boundaries.

Another factor against him was the disputed parish boundaries between Benson, Ewelme and Berrick Salome, not to mention Fifield Manor which was owned by the Verney family. The Verneys had been impoverished by the English civil war and were glad to sell property which was not close to their main estates near

Buckingham. Thomas bought Fifield in 1818 and his married son Robert farmed it from 1829.

In 1830 Thomas applied to parliament again to enclose the land he owned, by then nearly thirty per cent. The day after the application was published in the local paper Thomas Newton's house was raided at 2 a.m. by a mob who demanded that he listen to their grievances. The incident was called a Swing riot, named after an anonymous threatening letter signed by "Swing".

Swing riots occurred in other parts of England. The identity of Swing was never known. Enclosure was generally only popular with richer farmers. It did not finally happen in this area until 1862.

The Newtons sold Crowmarsh Battle farm to the Chamberlain family in 1874. A much fuller description of the Newtons is written by Kate Tiller in Benson, "A village through its History." The Chamberlain family have farmed Crowmarsh Battle Farm until the present with good relations with Benson.