

Francis Murray Newton was born at Grange Barton, near Pitminster, a house the Newton family had owned for several generations. Where he received his education is not known but he obtained an MA degree at University College, Oxford.

At the age of 29, in 1881, according to the census data, he was employed as a teacher at Eton College, as head of the school of practical mechanics. Unfortunately, Eton College has not been able to supply any further information as to his time there. In the same year, he also obtained a patent, No. 4559 dated 19<sup>th</sup> October for “Improvements in Apparatus for Generating and using Electricity”, and in 1882, he filed a patent, No. 3570 of 1882, for improvements in Arc Lamps.

He demonstrated electric lighting at Pitminster Church in 1881, and the next year at a dramatic performance at Corfe Village Hall. In the same year, he obtained a patent, No. 3570, for “Improvements in Electric Arc Lamps.” (The provisional specification and drawings can be found as Appendix 1)

At about this time, he seems to have developed a connection with the Belfast Electrical Appliance Company. By 1883, he was the company manager, as reported in the Somerset County Gazette for the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1884

“Mr Newton, the manager of the Belfast Electric Appliance Company Ltd. lit the Ragged School Bazaar with the electric light on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1883, and succeeded in giving a very satisfactory illustration of the advantages of his invention. This was the same system that Mr. Newton

demonstrated at Messrs Allens premises about two months ago.”

A much fuller description was given in the Belfast Newspapers.

“Not the least interesting part of the Ragged School Bazaar was the illumination of the Ulster Hall with the electric light. The hall was lighted yesterday afternoon and evening, as it was on Thursday, by four large arc lamps suspended from the ceiling by wires. The effect was extremely brilliant. The steadiness and the absence of those disagreeable fluctuations which generally characterise arc lighting were remarkable.

It is satisfactory to know that this work is carried out by a local company, the Belfast Electrical Appliance Company Ltd., who are now manufacturing all the material requisites for lighting on a large scale, the lamps, dynamo machines and carbons being all made in the company’s works, under patents which they control for this country. The arc lamp is the invention of Mr. Newton, the company’s engineer and is said to be quite a new departure in this system of lighting, and a great success.

It is understood that they are now running satisfactorily at Messrs Coombs and Barbours, Messrs, Martin’s yard, the Ballyclare Paper mills, and in London.”

About 1883, Frank began an electrical engineering business in England, at Barton Grange.

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ELECTRIC LIGHT.

F. M. NEWTON, ELECTRIC LIGHT ENGINEER,

WORKS—BARTON GRANGE, TAUNTON,

IS PREPARED to CARRY OUT the LIGHTING, by ELECTRICITY, of Shops, Show-rooms, Workshops, Private Dwellings, or Public-rooms, in a thoroughly Reliable and Efficient Manner, and to SUPPLY STEAM or GAS ENGINES, New Safety, Motors, Dynamo Machines, Electric Lamps and Fittings, including Ornamental or Plain Brackets, Pendants, Electroliers, Portable Electric READING-LAMPS, and all accessories.

Mr. NEWTON begs specially to call attention to the advantages of the Employment of Reliable Storage Batteries (of which he has now had two years' successful experience), by means of which the consumer is entirely independent of the Stoppage of the Engine Supplying the Source of Electricity.

The light is thereby rendered absolutely safe, steady and always available at any time of day or night by the simple turning of a tap or switch, no match or other light being required. The risk of fire is also infinitely less than with any other illuminant.

Mr. NEWTON is also prepared to supply the necessary plant for the public lighting of streets and open spaces, builders' and contractors' yards, etc., by means of his Patent Arc Lamp, known as "THE BELFAST ARC LAMP," which he is confident will be found the simplest to manage, and cheapest to keep in order of any in the market.

Testimonials and particulars on application to Mr. NEWTON or Messrs. C. ALLEN and SON, Tone Foundry, Taunton.

*(Advertisement from the Somerset County Gazette, 1886.)*

From this advertisement, it appears that Frank Newton had continued the connection with the Tone Bridge Foundry, who probably were the suppliers of castings for his dynamos and motors.