

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SUDELEY CASTLE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name:	SUDELEY CASTLE
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Tewkesbury (District Authority)
Parish:	Sudeley
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Tewkesbury (District Authority)
Parish:	Winchcombe
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.947681 Longitude: -1.9587068 National Grid Reference: SP 02935 27688 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000784 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

C19 and C20 formal gardens within parkland of medieval origin.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the mid C9, Sudeley was the property of King Ethelred. The estate was rich in oak trees and included a royal deer park. Unusually, the property was not confiscated after the Norman Conquest, but remained in the de Sudeley family, descendants of Ethelred. In 1441, Ralph Boteler (d 1473), Admiral of the Fleet, was created Baron Sudeley. His projects included the rebuilding of the Castle and the construction of St Mary's chapel, the Banqueting Hall, the Great Barn, and the Portmare Tower. Following Lancaster's defeat in the Wars of the Roses, in 1469 Boteler was forced to sell the Castle to Edward IV.

Thomas Seymour, Lord High Admiral of England and Baron of Sudeley, married Catherine Parr in secret in 1547, soon after the death of Henry VIII. In the same year, Edward VI gave Sudeley to Seymour and Catherine Parr went to live in the Castle with Seymour's niece, Lady Jane Grey. Catherine died in 1548, a few days after giving birth to a daughter. Seymour was executed in 1549, after an attempt to overthrow his brother by arranging the marriage of Edward VI and Jane Grey. Queen Mary granted Sudeley to Thomas Brydges, created first Lord Chandos of Sudeley in 1554. Queen Elizabeth visited Sudeley on three occasions, the last in 1593.

The Castle and parkland were damaged during the Commonwealth and following the Civil War were left semi-derelict for 188 years. St Mary's chapel was desecrated by the Roundheads. George Pitt, Lord Rivers of Sudeley, inherited a large part of the present estate in the late C18, including the Castle, because his grandfather had married the widow of the sixth Lord Chandos. Substantial holdings, including the Home Parks, came into the hands of the Montagu family (dukes of Manchester) with whom they remained until the early C19 when they belonged briefly to Lord Boston. In 1812 the Duke of Buckingham bought the

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Castle and 60 acres (c 24ha) of land from Lord Rivers. Brothers John and William Dent (Worcester glove-makers) purchased the bulk of the estate from Lord Rivers' Trustees in 1829 and the Castle and its 60 acres (c 24ha) of land from the Duke of Buckingham in 1837. Lord Boston's holding was not purchased until c 1858. John and William, with their brother, the Rev Benjamin Dent, set about restoring the Castle and chapel and laid out the formal gardens. They planted many of the now mature trees in the park west of the Castle. They employed the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-78), who concentrated on the chapel. The Castle had been made habitable by c 1840 but by 1855, all the Dent brothers had died. Their nephew John Coucher Dent (d 1885) inherited the Castle and estate and, in 1847, married Emma Brocklehurst, daughter of the MP for Macclesfield. She oversaw the final remodelling of the Castle, embellished the existing formal gardens, and laid out new ones around the Castle. She planted the avenue in 1891 and also added many new trees to the park. In 1877, Emma published the 'Annals of Winchcombe and Sudeley'. She provided almshouses (in 1856, to designs by Sir George Gilbert Scott) and a new school and improved the parish church in Winchcombe. On her death in 1900, her nephew Henry Dent-Brocklehurst inherited Sudeley Castle. Henry's son Mark died in the first year of his inheritance but his wife, Lady Ashcombe, has, since the 1970s, laid out several new formal gardens around the Castle. Sudeley Castle remains in private hands today (2000).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sudeley Castle stands c 1km south-east of the small town of Winchcombe which is c 6m north-east of Cheltenham and 10km south of Evesham. The registered area of c 44ha (approximately the extent of the Victorian park) is bounded to the north-east by a minor road from Winchcombe to Guiting Power and by a stream to the south and south-east. The park is enclosed by mixed hedges, post and rail fences and, along the northern boundary, by C19 wrought-iron railings set on a bank above a wall; C19 wrought-iron railings also divide the pleasure grounds from the park.

Sudeley and Winchcombe are situated at the northern end of an enclosed, undulating, spring-fed valley on the western escarpment of the Cotswold Hills. There are extensive views south, south-west, and south-east, over the surrounding farmland.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The west drive is approached from the south side of Winchcombe, off Abbey Terrace, via Duck Street (also known as Vineyard Street), which is flanked by early C19 almshouses. The late C19 Vineyard Bridge stands 850m north-west of the Castle and marks the entrance to the west drive, which extends 200m south-east, flanked by C19 iron railings and a lime avenue, to reach Almsbury Lodge. Almsbury Farm (listed grade II), a group of stone buildings, stands c 100m north of Almsbury Lodge (outside the area here registered).

The avenue, as planted by Emma Dent in the late C19, extended south from the junction of Duck Street and Abbey Terrace, running in front of the almshouses, where the lime trees are now pollarded. The drive enters the park immediately north of Almsbury Lodge (1893, now known as West Lodge), a rusticated, castellated archway and lodge with tower, which stands at the north-west corner of the park. The drive curves around the west side of the Lodge (it originally passed through the Lodge) then runs through the park, carried across the lake by an ornate stone bridge (1891) in a similar style to Vineyard Bridge. The avenue, flanking the drive, was planted with beeches in 1891, and runs south-east for c 800m from Almsbury Lodge towards the Castle. Originally, its whole length was a drive but now (January 2000) an adventure playground stands across its east end and only the west end is surfaced for use by vehicles. The north part of the avenue is of horse chestnuts, planted by friends in memory of Mark Dent-Brocklehurst (1932-72) in 1979. The drive curves north c 100m west of the Castle, then returns south, to enter the pleasure grounds via a wrought-iron gate set in iron railings, c 80m west of the Castle; it then leads across a grass forecourt to the west door.

North Lodge (J P Wyatt 1886, listed grade II) stands c 150m north of the Castle, off the Guiting Road, and marks the entrance to the North Drive. It is a three-storey, castellated ashlar gatehouse with central wrought-iron double gates in a stone archway. A curving drive, lined by an avenue of mature lime trees, leads south, across open lawns, to the north entrance of the Castle, which is surrounded by a semicircle of 1m high variegated holly hedge, bowing outwards from the Castle. A further gateway lies 50m north-west of North Lodge. It is set slightly back from the road, flanked by two low, square stone piers with pyramidal capped tops. From here a further drive extends south-west past a car park to join the west drive, c 100m west of the Castle. A

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narrow strip of unmown meadow (known as the Butterfly Walk) extends along the south-east side of the drive from the car park to North Lodge. A further car park lies c 20m south of the Castle and is reached from the forecourt entrance via a service drive. **PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Sudeley Castle stands towards the north-east corner of its roughly rectangular park. The layout of the Castle (listed grade I) is substantially as it was built by Ralph Boteler in the mid C15 but there have been additions and alterations in the late C15, late C16, mid C19, and early C20. The Castle consists of two-storey buildings and occasional towers around an inner and an outer courtyard. The buildings are of coursed, squared stone and ashlar, with crenellated stone slate roofs and lead flats. The large, rectangular outer courtyard, to the north of the inner, is surrounded by the east and west ranges (the west range is largely Victorian in appearance but includes C15 masonry) and the gatehouse (Boteler c 1442). The inner courtyard has the ruins of what is known as the Banqueting Hall (but which was more likely to have been the presence chamber of a royal suite) to its east and the kitchens to its west. It is open to the gardens at its south end, whereas the outer courtyard is completely enclosed by buildings. At the two ends of the cross range (dated 1889) between the courtyards are the Portmure Tower, at the west end, and the Garderobe Tower, at the east end. These are also by Ralph Boteler (C15). At the south-west corner of the inner courtyard is the C15 Dungeon Tower.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds surround the Castle on all but its south side and are enclosed by C19 wrought-iron railings with a chain as the top link. A broad, raised, unplanted gravel terrace runs along the west side of the Castle for c 50m. It is supported by a mid C19 wall (listed grade II) of ashlar and coursed, squared stone. At the west side of the terrace are three C19 lean-to dog kennels with stone slate roofs (listed grade II).

To the north and north-west of the Castle is a large area (c 2ha) of lawn with occasional mature trees (ash, lime etc), through which the north drive runs. A large walnut tree stands c 30m north of the Castle and may be c 200 years old (Emma Dent's Diary, 1877). A winding tarmac path curves north-east, connecting the west drive to the north drive, which is lined by mature lime trees. To the south-west of the Castle's north entrance is a small area of gardens, enclosed by privet hedges.

At the north-west edge of the open lawn stand the ruins of the Great Barn. This mid C15, thirteen-bay, stone tithe barn (listed grade I) stands c 100m north-west of the Castle and faces south-east. A grass slope leads north-west, down from the main lawn to the gardens on the south-east front of the Great Barn. The Long Pool, a rectangular carp pool (c 1930), runs almost the length of the barn (c 50m), on the site of Emma Dent's mid C19 maze. Thick yew hedges, c 1.5m high, run south-east from the north-east and south-west ends of the pool for c 30m, thus the pool is enclosed by hedges to the north-east and south-west and by the barn to the north-west. Only the pool's south-east side remains open. Informal herbaceous borders have been laid out inside and north-west of the barn walls. The pool overlooks the northern, inhabited end of the Castle, to the south-east.

To the north-east of the Barn is the Butterfly Walk: a wildflower area (late 1990s) within mature trees. On the east side of the lawns, a 100m long pool, known as the Moat, runs north/south, its southern end terminating c 50m north-east of the Castle. This open canal was widened by 4 yards (c 3.5m) (and presumably stone revetted) by Emma Dent c 1886; it is currently further revetted with concrete to take wire fencing. The Moat, present by 1783 (Singleton Landscape 1993), is unlikely to have originated as a real moat: it is more likely to have been a fishpond, possibly incorporating earlier ponds. A row of clipped Irish yews with alternate weeping silver pears extends along the west side of the Moat and from here a grass slope leads down to the main lawns to the west. The slope is bridged by five stone steps leading from the centre of the west side of the Moat. To the east of the Moat is an area of trees and shrubs, with a late C20 tennis court beyond. Three stone steps, flanked by clipped yews, lead down from the south end of the Moat to a gravel path which runs east/west. Stone steps lead up from the east end of the path to the Hopyard. To the south of the path is a c 2m high ashlar, Jacobean garden wall, to the south of which are the church and formal gardens. Clipped yews grow against the north side of the wall at c 5m intervals.

A gateway in the wall leads south into an enclosed Secret Garden, occupying the site of a C19 rose garden which was replanted in 1979 by Rosemary Verey (that planting is now lost). The garden is edged by raised beds supported by rubble walls. The south side of the garden is bounded by a c 2m high yew hedge. A gap in this leads to lawns on the north side of St Mary's church (c 1460, listed grade I), at the north-east corner of which stands a huge cedar of Lebanon. The church was built for Ralph Boteler and was extensively restored in 1859-63 by Sir George Gilbert Scott, after falling into decay in the C18. It is a five-bay, rectangular, ashlar building with a square tower at its west end and a crenellated parapet with crocketed finials.

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At the west end of the church is a circular area enclosed by large yew hedges and containing a central, circular, box-edged bed. A yew hedge-flanked path leads north from the circle to a mid C19 gateway (listed grade II) in the ashlar garden wall. At the south end of the circular enclosure, stone steps lead down to a gravel walk along the east side of the Castle. Along the south wall of the church, the ground is laid largely to lawn, with the small square White Garden (late C20) marking the site of the Queen's chapel. A double yew hedge divides the church and garden from the Queen's Garden, below and c 30m to the south.

The Queen's Garden lies 20m east of the Castle, on the site of a Jacobean garden, the remains of which were discovered by the Dent brothers. The Jacobean garden was contemporary with, and aligned on, the Banqueting Hall. It is now (late C20, as redesigned by Emma Dent) a sunken garden, surrounded on its north, east, and south sides by grass banks leading up to a terrace walk, probably of the C19. To the west of the Queen's Garden, three mature sycamores stand adjacent to the wall of the Banqueting Hall. Double yew hedges c 50m long stand to the north and south of, and parallel with, the Queen's Garden, which is square in shape and edged by 1m high box hedges. Emma Dent planted the yew alleys in 1860 using trees 10-12 feet (3-3.5m) in height (Emma Dent's Diary). The Queen's Garden is quartered by gravel paths into beds of roses and other shrubs, edged by low hedges of box and herbs. At the centre of the garden is a stone-balustraded pool (mid C19) and fountain (installed between 1909 and 1940, listed grade II). A pair of Irish yews flanks the east and west entrances to the garden. The hedges and most of the standard yews in the formal gardens date from 1856 (McQuitty Landscape Design 1999).

Two flights of stone steps lead from the south-west corner and east end of the Queen's Garden, up to the balustraded grass walk overlooking the Hopyard field in the park to the east and the Home Park to the south. Large yew (golden and green) and golden box topiary shapes stand at intervals along the walk. To the south and east of the walk, a stone retaining wall, topped with balustrade (listed grade II), supports the terrace walk and separates the formal gardens from the park.

At the south-west corner of the Queen's Garden, a gravel path leads west into the inner courtyard. This rectangular area, between the Banqueting Hall to the east and the kitchen range to the west, is divided into three compartments by yew hedges running east/west. The southernmost courtyard compartment has a lawn, edged to the east by a yew hedge with topiary shapes cut into the top, to the south by a grass slope, and to the north by a clipped yew hedge. To its west, south of the Dungeon Tower, is the small Mulberry Garden, consisting of the rooted branches of one mulberry tree, planted by Emma Dent in 1856. To the north of the southernmost compartment is the second compartment, a lawn with a 'buttressed' yew hedge to the north and a small area of paved gardens (early C20) to the east. The northernmost compartment in the inner courtyard contains a Moorish Knot Garden designed by Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall in the 1970s. This consists of intricate low box hedges and small Moorish tiled pools and is separated from the outer courtyard by a connecting corridor of buildings. A gate leads through the wall of the Banqueting Hall, at the south-east corner of the compartment, towards the church. A further, outer courtyard to the north of the inner courtyard contains an oval lawn, surrounded by gravel, with a central oval stone pool.

PARK The undulating park, planted with mature individual trees and clumps, including oaks, beeches, walnuts, Atlas cedars, and horse chestnuts, with limes predominating, surrounds the Castle on all but its north side. From the 1840s onwards, now mature parkland trees were planted firstly by the Dent brothers and then by Emma Dent. The park lies in a valley, surrounded by a ring of hills. Brooks form part of its south and west boundaries. The park is separated from the pleasure grounds by the wall east and south of the Queen's Garden and post and rail and wrought-iron fencing. Some sections of the medieval park walls survive (outside the area here registered) but the park has greatly decreased in extent since the medieval period. In the Home Park, south-west of the Castle, lie earthworks of a suspected deserted medieval settlement (Sue Hendry, McQuitty Landscape Design pers comm, 1999) as well as earthworks of springs. The boundary of the park here is a hedge and a post and rail fence, much of which stands on a small natural ridge. There are extensive views to the south, south-east, and south-west across farmland, to hills on the horizon. The Hopyard, to the east of the Castle, is laid to pasture but contains earthworks of the old fortified manor house, c 200m east of the Castle. Some of the earthworks have been exploited by tree planting, including several horse chestnuts, planted c 1930.

Some 300m south-east of Almsbury Lodge, the avenue (west drive) crosses a small Victorian lake (restored in the late C20), fed by Beesmoor Brook which flows from south-east to north-west through the park, towards Winchcombe. The area of park to the south-west of the avenue was previously agricultural land, bought and included in the park in the 1850s.

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The present (1999) visitors' car park, a grass area divided by gravel strips, is on the site of a Second World War prisoner of war camp, c 200m north-west of the Castle. To the north of the car park is a small area of grazing land.

REFERENCES

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Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition surveyed 1882-3, published 1883 [Further OS maps are included in Singleton Landscape 1993 and David McQuitty Landscape Design 1999]

Archival items Oblique aerial photographs, 1999 (NMR, Swindon):

Description written: December 1999 Amended: February 2001 Register Inspector: TVAC Edited: April 2003

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.