

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SUFTON COURT

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
SUFTON COURT

Name:	SUFTON COURT
District:	County of Herefordshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Mordiford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.036369 Longitude: -2.6229296 National Grid Reference: SO 57366 37735 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000898 Date first listed: 28-Feb-1986

Details

A landscape park and grounds laid out following submission of a Red Book by Humphry Repton in 1795 associated with a near-contemporary country house attributed to James Wyatt.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Hereford family has been seated at Sufton from the C12. In the 1780s James Hereford commissioned a new house and, in 1795, a landscape park. Sufton remains in private hands in the late C20.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sufton lies c 5 km east of Hereford, and c 1km north of the village of Mordiford on the minor road to Dormington. That road, which bounds the park to the west, runs along and just above the floodplain of the River Lugg which lies c 500m west of Sufton. East of Sufton the ground continues to rise on to Backbury Hill and to the much larger hill occupied by Haugh Wood. To the south is further high ground, Bagpiper's Tump and Westwood Hill, the hills in general forming part of the formation called the Woolhope Dome.

From the house there are panoramic views to the west, across the Lugg Meadows to Hereford and to the Black Mountains beyond. Equally, the house is highly visible from approaches to the south; a strikingly good view of the house and park, for instance, is obtained from Mordiford Bridge, c 1km to the south-west.

The registered area comprises c 30ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES One drive curves south-east, uphill, to the south front of the house from an entrance with rusticated gate piers, probably of c 1800, at the north-west corner of the park. A two-storey mid C19 lodge, of pale yellow brick and fretted bargeboards, stands on the north side of the entrance. Another drive loops north-east to the house from an entrance, again with rusticated gate piers, in the middle of the park's west boundary.

Although there are some discrepancies in Repton's written and drawn proposals for setting out new entrance drives to Sufton Court there is little doubt that the present entrances and looped drive were laid out following his advice.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Until the later C18 the Herefords were seated at the house subsequently known as Old Sufton. In the 1780s James Hereford called in an architect, almost certainly James Wyatt (1746-1813), to build a new house c 400m to the south-west, on an elevated site with panoramic views west towards Hereford and with rising ground behind. That new house, at first called Sufton Place but later Sufton Court (listed grade II*), was apparently occupied by 1789 (Whitehead 1992, 214). Of

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
SUFTON COURT

Bath stone ashlar, it is of five main bays and four storeys. The main, entrance front is to the south-west; a glass and iron porch was built around the entrance in the mid C19. Early C19 additions to the north side of the house were removed in the mid C20. North of the house, and abutting the kitchen garden, is a low brick and stone stables range.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure ground or garden at Sufton Court curves around its west and south sides, and to the east extends, rising in a gently undulating fashion, for over 100m to the bottom of the wooded slope of The Batches. Here the garden is bounded by a stone wall; elsewhere it is separated from the park beyond by an iron fence, along which laurels were planted in the mid 1990s. The garden comprises lawns with specimen trees (mature examples including a tulip tree, two Irish yews, common yews, lime, holly, silver birch, a sycamore and a Scots pine) and shrubs. Sinuous, broad gravel paths lead through the gardens; a new path, running east/west across the area occupied until the 1960s by the Victorian additions to the house, was created in the early 1990s when garden restoration work began. As part of that restoration flower beds were created near the house and replacement specimen trees were planted, while probably Victorian shrubberies, especially to the west of the house, were thinned or cleared.

Humphry Repton (1752-1818) spent two rainy days at Sufton in April 1795, and submitted a Red Book in July. As well as his scheme of improvements for the surrounds of the house (and indeed for changing the use of rooms within the house in order to give views west as well as south) Repton included in the preamble various general and polemical remarks on the appropriateness, or lack of it, of the style espoused by Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) and Uvedale Price (1747-1829) in their writings on the picturesque. Repton published his own views on the subject, *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*, in the same year he visited Sufton.

In terms of the Sufton scheme it seems likely that many of his proposals were followed, notably the use of a stock fence (rather than ha-ha) as a boundary between ornamental grounds and park, and the introduction of beds of fragrant flowers near to the house. The present-day views from the house to the south and west provide a remarkably unchanged comparison with two of the double-spread watercolours in the Red Book. His plan, however, fails to show any garden paths near the house, so while the gravel walks probably are contemporary with the garden's creation, to what extent they owe their detail to Repton is uncertain.

PARK The house stands in an elevated position towards the north end of the park, across which there are excellent views both from the south and west sides of the house. Overall the park is c 1km from north to south, and c 400m from east to west. Its western two-thirds, within which the house lies, is permanent pasture, well studded with mature specimen and parkland trees including a number of coniferous ones, the latter mainly around the lower part of the south drive. The eastern third of the park takes in the well-wooded (The Batches, The Grove) lower slopes of the hill or ridge which forms a backdrop to the house.

As with the pleasure grounds, it seems that Repton's proposals for establishing a landscape park around Sufton Court were largely followed, with hedges being grubbed out and new planting of trees, especially to screen the road down the west side of the site. The line of the road itself was probably straightened, removing a slight eastward curve in the northern third of the park boundary. Repton also proposed screening the kitchen garden and stables by planting shrubberies to their south and west. The 'hanging' wood east of the house was favourably remarked upon by Repton for its 'picturesque' qualities, and the name Lady's Walk which appears on OS maps suggests a walk may once have led through the wood from Sufton Court to Old Sufton although no memory of this was retained by the family in 1997. Contemporary references indicate the park was largely complete by 1805.

In Repton's time, and until at least the late C19, the park proper extended only a little beyond the north drive. North of the house was pasture ground and, beyond the kitchen garden, a large orchard. The area today effectively forms part of the landscape park, with permanent pasture and parkland trees.

KITCHEN GARDEN Three of the four walls of the kitchen garden, which lay on southward-sloping ground c 100m north-east of the house, were demolished in the 1960s. The south wall, however, which forms the north wall of the gardens around the house, was retained. The wall is c 90m long, c 2.5m high, and has pilaster buttresses and ceramic coping tiles.

The kitchen garden was already present when Repton came to Sufton in 1795, and was presumably constructed at the same time as the house (?late 1780s).

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
SUFTON COURT

REFERENCES The Field, (6 October 1894) H A Taylor, A Report on the Gardens at Sufton Court (1991) Trans Woolhope Naturalists Field Club 47, (1992), pp 210-36 and pls The Journal of the Picturesque Society 1, (1992) [transcription of, with commentary on, the Red Book] S Daniels and C Watkin, The Picturesque Landscape (1994), col pls VII, VIII, pp 82, 87 Garden History 22, (1994), pp 169-70

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Herefordshire sheet 40 NW, 1st edition published 1887 OS 25" to 1 mile: Herefordshire sheet 40.2, 2nd edition published 1904

Archival items Copy of Repton Red Book, (Herefordshire Record Office)

Description written: 1997 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: September 1999

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.