

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SWERFORD

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
SWERFORD

Name:	SWERFORD
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	Cherwell (District Authority)
Parish:	Hook Norton
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	West Oxfordshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Swerford
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.977876 Longitude: -1.4704730 National Grid Reference: SP 36468 31178 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001108 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Early C19 pleasure grounds and park surrounding an C18 country house, remodelled c 1820s, set on steep banks in the valley of the River Swere.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Duke of Buccleuch commissioned the house as a hunting lodge in 1783, and by 1797 the estate was known as Swerford Park (Davis, 1797). Mr J Smith Barry owned the estate from 1810 to 1820, and the Waterloo bridge and lake were probably constructed at this time (the bridge dated 1815), possibly with advice from J C Loudon who lived at, and laid out the landscape for nearby Great Tew Park c 1806(11. General Sir R Bolton (d 1836) owned the estate from c 1820, employing the architect Joseph M Gandy to remodel the house c 1824-9. Samuel Davis owned the estate in the mid C19 and built the stable block, dated 1864. In 1923 the estate was acquired by Lady O'Connor, whose husband was the Solicitor General, and the property remained in their ownership until the Second World War. The estate remains (1998) in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Swerford Park lies at the west end of the village of Swerford, c 8km north-east of Chipping Norton. The c 35ha site is bounded to the south partly by the extension west of the village street, and on the other sides by agricultural land, and straddles the steep valley sides above the River Swere. The setting is largely agricultural, with Swerford village to the east, and views of the church spire and surrounding buildings from the east drive whilst crossing the south park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach, lying c 600m south-east of the house, enters off the west end of the village street at the south-east corner of the park, set back off the street between stone gate piers and iron gates flanked by

pedestrian gates and a further adjacent pair of stone piers. The entrance is flanked by a low stone wall topped by iron railings to the west, terminating in a stone wall, and to the east a further low stone wall topped by a clipped box hedge, enclosing further railings. A two-storey stone lodge with a small crenellated porch stands close by to the north-east. The east drive curves north through the park, with views east towards the village, before entering the pleasure grounds flanking the lake and river, the entrance marked by two stone gate piers and an ornamental iron field gate (C19). The drive continues north, through woodland underplanted with shrubs, across the three-arched, stone Waterloo bridge (dated 1815, listed grade II) which crosses the dam at the east end of the lake, with views west along the water. The east side of the bridge conceals a long drop down to where the river re-emerges from the dam. The drive curves north-west along the north edge of the pleasure grounds, overlooking the meadow leading down to lake to the south, and fields to the north, continuing west on a serpentine course through woodland underplanted with shrubs, arriving close to the north front of the house. A set of stone steps (C20) leads down to the central recessed entrance bay. Formerly a spur off the drive c 30m north-east of the house (now gone) gave direct access to the north front.

A second drive, formerly the main carriage approach, enters the park 400m south of the house, from the lane to the south. The south drive runs north, flanked for 200m by an avenue of mature beeches, possibly dating from the early C19 (OS 1833), down into the valley, entering the pleasure grounds at the north end of the avenue, crossing the river via the small, brick Japanese bridge standing c 75m south of the house, looking up to the house on its promontory to the north and down to the meadow below. The drive curves up the slope to the north, with a spur giving access to the farm to the west, arriving at the stable yard standing c 50m west of the house. A spur east from here curves round to the west front of the house.

A third, north drive enters off the Swerford to Great Rollright lane, 600m north of the house, running south down the hillside flanked by a mature lime avenue, entering the pleasure grounds c 75m north-west of the house. A spur east from here meets the east drive above the house, whilst the main north drive runs into the stable yard adjacent to the south.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Swerford Park house (C18, alterations by J Gandy 1820s, listed grade II*) stands close to the centre of the north boundary of the site. Following construction for the Duke of Buccleuch as a hunting lodge in 1783 (although it contains doorcases c 1750; Pevsner 1974), the house was remodelled with Soanian features by Sir John Soane's main assistant and draughtsman, Joseph Michael Gandy, 1824-9. The compact, three-storey stone building is stuccoed, with the north, entrance front containing a central entrance bay. The east, garden front has a garden door offset to the south of centre, from which an iron staircase leads down to the lawns below. The south front, with two full-height bay-windows, stands above a narrow terrace cut into the top of the steep hillside below, overlooking the spectacular river valley and pleasure grounds to the south, west and east. The stone stable yard stands c 50m west of the house, the north side formed by a stone block dated 1864, with a central archway giving access from the north. The east side of the yard is bounded by an older, lower block, with the west boundary formed by the walled garden.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The small garden lies adjacent to the east front, comprising a square formal lawn edged by a stone path and perimeter borders, enclosed largely by stone walls, reached from the house by the iron stairway in the east front. Beyond the enclosed lawn lies an informal lawn surrounded by borders and mature shrubs and trees, with a rockery forming the south side. A path leads from here to the narrow, stone-paved terrace below the south front, bounded on its south side by a stone balustrade above a steep drop down into the valley below.

Informal paths lead south and east from the house and gardens into the pleasure grounds, dominated by the River Swere, which bisects the whole site, opening out into the lake to the east. The river enters the site at the west boundary, running east, crossed by a bridge standing 450m south-west of the house. From here the river descends east via several small cascades, through woodland. A track runs south from the farm to the north, crossing the river via the bridge and continuing east through the pleasure grounds above the south side of the river, the steep hillside to the south being covered with mature woodland. The track continues east, meeting the south drive flanked by the beech avenue 200m south of the house. Close by lies the brick icehouse. A rocky cascade lies in the river 150m south-west of the house, where the woodland opens out into meadow land to the east. Leading east off the south drive a path enters the meadow between the house and the river, along which are several small cascades, and above which, to the south, further woodland rises steeply as a backdrop enclosing the whole of this section of the river and lake. The river continues east, with the adjacent meadow bounded to the north by a belt of mature trees. The

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
SWERFORD

water gradually widens out into the long, narrow lake, leaving the pleasure grounds beneath the Waterloo bridge carrying the east drive.

PARK The park, laid to pasture, lies to the south of the pleasure grounds, east of the south drive, with a further section in the north-west of the site, surrounding the farmyard. The south park, divided into several fields, contains several clumps of mature limes, and is bounded to the south by a line of mature trees, the land sloping gently down to the pleasure grounds to the north. The north-west park is also divided into fields planted with several mature clumps; the remains of a ha-ha or similar structure along the south side of its eastern boundary divide it off from the pleasure grounds.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden, largely laid to lawn with ornamental features, lies 100m west of the house from which it is separated by the stable yard below to the east. It retains stone walls to the west and north, with a lower stone wall to the east. The brick-lined interior of the north wall formerly supported three glasshouses, of which only that at the eastern, lower end of the range still survives. It is a lean-to construction with an unusual curved wooden outer structure, possibly of the mid C19. The base of the former range to the west remains, with low brick walls on the south side containing small brick arches, to the south of which are two terraced, enclosed beds. These ranges may have been vineries, with the vine roots planted outside in the outer beds, and the main stems fed through into the glasshouses.

REFERENCES

N Pevsner and J Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), pp 798-9

Maps R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford ...*, 1797 Swerford Enclosure map, 1805 (Oxfordshire County Record Office) A Bryant, *Map of the County of Oxford ...*, surveyed 1823

OS 1" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1833 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1885 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1923 OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1922

Description written: June 1998 Amended: March 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

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.