

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

SANDFORD PARK

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

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Name:	SANDFORD PARK
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	West Oxfordshire (District Authority)
Parish:	Sandford St. Martin
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.940112 Longitude: -1.3987942 National Grid Reference: SP4142627016 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001104 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

A country house with landscape park and gardens, including late C17/early C18 spiral mount, late C18 pleasure grounds and 1930s formal terraced garden.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Croker family and their descendants owned the area now covered by Sandford Park from the C16 to the C19, it being, until c 1725, part of the property belonging to the Manor adjacent to the south. The early C18 house was possibly built by Gerard Croker (d 1733), with a mid C18 park added to the west, its north boundary running approximately along the line of the current series of lakes (VCH). Following enclosure in 1768, Mary Heywood (d 1797), the owner from 1772, seems to have extended the park northwards to its present extent (1998), creating a new entrance off the Ledwell road and a drive across the whole park, crossing the seven-arched bridge over the lowest lake. There is now no visible trace of this drive. Mary Heywood may also have created or extended the pleasure grounds, which appear to be of mid to late C18 origin. In 1849 the estate was sold to Edwin Guest, Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, who died in 1880. The estate was split up in the 1920s, the house and park being bought in 1930 by Sir Geoffrey Peto and his wife who created a new formal garden south-west of the house, extending the garden west into the park. The park and house remain (1998) in private ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Sandford Park lies along the west side of the village of Sandford St Martin, 10km north of Woodstock, spread across low hills. The c 50ha site is enclosed by a stone boundary wall (parts of which standing adjacent to the village street are listed grade II, probably C18), and beyond this is bounded largely by agricultural land, and Sandford village to the east. The setting is largely rural, with the small park of Sandford Manor to the south.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach, directly off the village street, enters c 15m north-east of the house, between mid C19 stone gate piers and iron gates, flanked by a high C18 wall (all listed grade II). Adjacent to the north stands a two-storey lodge, probably formed out of a former barn in the C19, with an elaborate Dutch gable and an archway adjacent to the west (listed grade II). The gateway overlooks the north-east corner of the gravel forecourt which lies adjacent to the east

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front of the house, bounded to the east by the extension of the south wall attached to the gateway, and to the north by the lodge and an attached, irregularly angled stone wall with a gateway into the adjacent stable yard to the west. A small niche or alcove is inserted into this dividing wall between the stable yard and forecourt, close to the north front of the house. The south side of the forecourt is bounded by the open south lawn.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Sandford Park (c 1700, enlarged late C18, listed grade II\*) stands towards the south-east corner of the site, on the east boundary, close to the village street and almost opposite the parish church. The two-storey, rectangular stone building overlooks lawns and its own park to the west, with access from this front to the lawns via a garden door with a small porch. Projecting from the north front is an L-shaped, two-storey, stone stable block (c 1700, C19, listed grade II) partly enclosing the triangular stable yard to the west and north, its south-east boundary formed by the irregularly angled stone wall separating the stable yard from the forecourt. The north range of the stable block includes an archway with a large square dovecote built above, with the lodge standing adjacent at the east end.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens lie close to the west and south of the house. The south lawn, lying adjacent to the south front and forecourt and overlooked by the church tower, is enclosed by the boundary wall with the village street to the east and the north wall of the walled garden to the south, and is separated from the west lawn by several clipped yew topiary figures along its west edge. The level west lawn, lying adjacent to the west front, extends west to a small grass bank running down to a lower lawn (the bank possibly running along the site of the original ha-ha, before the extension of the lawn between 1900 and 1922 (OS)) which is bounded to the west by a stone ha-ha c 60m west of the house. The west lawn is bisected centrally by a curving gravel path running north from its south end, giving access to the pleasure grounds. At the south-west corner of the lawn lies the formal terraced garden created by Sir Geoffrey Peto and his wife in the 1930s, with its upper terrace aligned, across the south lawn, on the church tower to the east. Lower, parallel terraces, with drystone retaining walls lying adjacent to the south are reached via a short, double stone stair. The lowest terrace contains a central, oval rose bed, surrounded by a path, bounded to the south by a stone wall. West of the terraced garden stands a swimming pool building (late C20) projecting into the park.

A C17 or early C18 spiral mount (listed grade II) stands c 150m south of the house, separated from the main gardens by the walled garden and the mid C20 Hazel Cottage adjacent to the south. The mount has a spiral path, retained by rubble-stone walls forming a three-tiered structure, leading up to a level viewing area at the top. Many mature, un-clipped box plants line the path, and a mature yew tree stands at the edge of one of the paths on the east side. At the end of the C19 (OS 1900) the mount lay at the south end of a series of gardens enclosed by stone walls, beginning with the walled garden south of the house, leading south down to a glasshouse on its south boundary, and from there to a circular formal feature (where the C20 cottage garden is now), and continuing south to the mount at the south corner. It is possible that the mount was intended to afford views south over Sandford Manor and its grounds, which was in the same ownership as the Park before c 1725.

North of the house and gardens lie the C18 wooded pleasure grounds, enclosing a series of lakes extending west from the village street down a small valley. Paths run through the woodland, parallel to the lakes, with views out over the flanking parkland and south-east towards the west front of the house. The pleasure grounds are entered at their south-east corner from the west lawn, the path running north across a bridge with a small cascade between the highest lake and the second lake, below it to the west. From here a view extends west along the second lake, terminated by the east face of the Chinoiserie double alcove (late C18, listed grade II\*), standing 200m north-west of the house at the west end of the second lake and above the east end of the third lake. This is a substantial stone-faced and roofed building, containing two back-to-back 270° alcoves, each with a round-headed archway below a shallow pediment, surmounted by a cupola with Chinese-trellis balustrade, a wooden frieze of bells and an ogee roof. The two interiors contain white-painted wooden vaults with Chinoiserie curved benches. The west-facing alcove overlooks the south park and the third lake to the west. South of the second lake lies a rock garden formed out of a limestone quarry with a pond fed by a rill from the east, now (1998) rather overgrown. Connecting the second and third lakes is an earth bank with a small, formal, stone cascade, the floor of which is inset with small stone projections to break the flow of the water. This feature has only recently (1997) been uncovered.

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Paths continue along the north side of the third lake, arriving at a larger, informal cascade with rockwork, set into an earth bank. An icehouse is said to lie behind this structure, within the bank (Mr P Cooper, agent, pers comm). Two curved stone benches flank the bottom of the cascade. North-west of the cascade, and 400m north-west of the house, set back from the water, stands an oval, stone-faced summerhouse (late C18, listed grade II), with a wooden pediment over a square-headed opening overlooking the fourth, lowest lake and cascade. Two small square windows in the north and south sides allow views north into the woodland and south along the lowest lake, towards the seven-arched bridge which spans its centre north to south. At this point the woodland reaches its western extent; the path continues west along the north edge of the lowest lake, passing the north entrance to the stone bridge (early/mid C18, listed grade II). The Baroque-style bridge (partly restored 1997) contains seven graduated arches, the widest arch being at the centre. There is no parapet. No attached drive or path is visible, but it is said that a drive crossed it in the later C18 (VCH). The path from the pleasure grounds continues along the lake to its west end, where it is supported by a raised bank encircling the curved shore-line, the path continuing down into the woodland which encircles the west and south sides of the park.

**PARK** The park is divided into two sections by the chain of lakes and the pleasure grounds. The smaller south (earlier) half probably dates from the mid C18. It is laid to pasture, enclosed by woodland to the west and south, falling away west from the house to the valley bottom in which the woodland stands. The mill pond at the south-east corner (outside the park wall) is fed by a mill leat running through the centre of the belt of woodland, arising from west of the lakes. The leat is canalised, and of curved, brick construction in places.

The north park, formed after enclosure in 1768, is largely cultivated arable land and contains several clumps of trees. Bounded to the west by woodland, Scotland Plantation lies in the north-east corner. A cricket ground lies on the plateau towards the northern boundary, with the hillside falling away to the south and views extending over the pleasure grounds towards the south park and house, and beyond the park to the rolling countryside to the east.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The rectangular walled garden stands 30m south of the house, adjacent to the south lawn, enclosed by brick and stone walls (C18, listed grade II). It is entered from the north off the south lawn between wooden gates with Chinese-trellis lower sections and top rails which sweep up to the piers. West of the gateway the north wall is lowered, enabling views in from the south front and adjacent lawn. The east wall contains a blocked ornamental doorway, formerly giving onto the village street. The garden contains a central north/south grass path, and is largely laid to lawn, with several fruit trees and a small glasshouse in the north-east corner. The south wall was probably constructed in the early C20, as it does not appear on mapping before 1900 (OS). Adjacent, at the south-west corner, stands a group of small bothies, and west of this is an open kitchen garden area, with a tennis court to the west.

#### REFERENCES

E Marshall, *An Account of the Parish of Sandford* (1866) *Country Life*, 87 (11 May 1940), pp 480-4 *Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire* 11, (1983), pp 169-74

Maps R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford ...*, 1797 A Bryant, *Map of the County of Oxford ...*, surveyed 1823 OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886 2nd edition published 1900 1922 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900 1922 edition

Description written: January 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.