

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SUTTON PLACE

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

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SUTTON PLACE

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| Name: | SUTTON PLACE |
| County: | Surrey |
| District: | Guildford (District Authority) |
| Parish: | Non Civil Parish |
| County: | Surrey |
| District: | Guildford (District Authority) |
| Parish: | Send |
| County: | Surrey |
| District: | Woking (District Authority) |
| Parish: | Non Civil Parish |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 51.272753 Longitude: -0.54990524 National Grid Reference: TQ 01252 53621 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001554 Date first listed: 08-Aug-2001 |

Details

A landscape park laid out in the late C18 or C19 to accompany a Tudor mansion, with gardens and pleasure grounds largely laid out in the C19 and early C20. In the 1980s Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe designed features which were inserted into several of the existing garden compartments, with a lake which was laid out in the park; together these form one of his most important works.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the early 1520s the manor of Sutton was granted by Henry VIII to courtier and statesman Sir Richard Weston (1476-1542), who had been knighted in 1514. In the late 1520s Sir Richard began building a new house enclosing a courtyard on a virgin site some distance away from the old house which stood in Manor Field. Sir Richard entertained Henry VIII at Sutton Place in 1533. Following Sir Richard's death the estate remained in the ownership of the family, and Queen Elizabeth visited in 1560 during her first Royal Progress. During the mid C17 Richard Weston III, who was a noted agriculturist, altered the River Wey which ran through the estate, to make it navigable.

An illustration of c 1700 (guidebook) shows a walled garden to the west of the house, with a summerhouse incorporated into the walls, and a further walled garden to the east. A double avenue of trees extended northwards from the gatehouse and a

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semicircular forecourt on the north side of the house. By 1768 (Rocque) the house was surrounded by formal gardens on three sides, with a double avenue extending north from the gatehouse to the River Wey Navigation arm. No parkland appears to have been laid out by this point. The gatehouse was demolished in 1784.

By the late C19 (OS 1870) parkland surrounded the house on all sides, with informal gardens adjacent to the house. A riverside walk to the south formed part of a circuit walk from the house through a narrow band of pleasure grounds to the west. In 1900 Sutton Place was leased to the newspaper proprietor Lord Northcliffe, who, together with his wife, carried out extensive works to the gardens, laying out several formal garden enclosures. Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) advised and produced designs, and the garden was extended into the parkland south of the house. Wooded pleasure grounds were laid out on the slope between the plateau which the house and lawn occupied and the River Wey below. By 1913 (OS 1912; Architectural Review 1913) several formal compartments had been laid out close to the house, and the wooded pleasure grounds on the bank laid out with a complex network of paths.

The Duke of Sutherland bought the estate in 1919, selling it to J Paul Getty, the oil magnate, in 1959. In 1980 Stanley J Seeger bought the estate and commissioned Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-96) to produce designs which were implemented in several areas of the garden and the park. The site remains (2001) in single private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Sutton Place lies 5km south of Woking and 3km north-east of the centre of Guildford, the estate lying adjacent to the north-west of the A3 London to Portsmouth road. The c 90ha site is bounded to the east and south by flood meadows through which runs the River Wey, split at this point into the Navigation and unimproved arms. To the west and north the site is bounded by further agricultural land. The site occupies a plateau encircled to the north, east, and south by a drain connected with the River Wey Navigation. The setting is rural with long views extending south-east to the North Downs, and north towards Woking.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main approach enters off the A3, 1.2km south-east of the mansion at Sutton Place Lodges (C18, listed grade II). The brick Lodges, of two storeys built in Tudor style with crenellated parapets, are flanked by short lengths of brick wall, and in turn flank two crenellated brick piers which support iron gates. From here the east drive runs north-west between an avenue of oaks for 150m, before being carried across the River Wey by a wooden bridge. The drive continues north-west set on a causeway, with views across the flood meadows to the north-west and south-east (outside the area here registered), and over the parkland to the north before turning west-south-west 120m from the house. At this point the drive is separated from the parkland to the north-east by a stone ha-ha (probably early C20). The drive crosses a broad lawn flanked by trees and set with the remains of a mature lime avenue, before arriving at the gravel forecourt on the north-east front of the house. The main door lies at the centre of the south-west wing on the far side of the forecourt. A spur south-west 75m north-east of the house gives access to the stable yard and other service buildings to the north-west of the house, which are heavily screened from the approach so that only the house itself is visible.

The east drive largely follows the course of a former lane which in the mid C18 connected the London to Guildford road with the hamlet of Sutton Green to the north. The double avenue which extended north-east from the gatehouse at that time intersected with the lane to give access to the house, before continuing beyond to the Wey Navigation arm (Rocque, 1768).

A further approach enters 1km north-west of the house, at Woking Lodges, giving access from Woking and Sutton Green to the north. The west drive is flanked by two two-storey brick lodges in Tudor style, the southern one, called North-West Lodge, was built in the 1860s and was the model for the northern one, which is dated 1920. A pair of wooden piers support white-painted wooden gates, and from here the drive extends east along an avenue of mixed Wellingtonia and Scots pine set in a lawn and bounded by a hawthorn hedge. After 200m the drive enters the park, turning south-east to pass between a group of buildings including Vine Cottage and the Roman Catholic church of St Edward the Confessor (listed grade II) to the west and Ladygrove Farm (possibly dating from the C16) to the east. To the west of the chapel is Manor Field, the site of the former manor house. From this area views extend north towards Woking and low hills. The drive continues east through parkland, passing The Garden Cottage which stands adjacent on the south side of the drive overlooking the park and lake, 200m west-

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north-west of the house, with further long views extending north and east towards low hills. The west drive joins the east drive 120m north-east of the house, to run south-west to the house.

The point at which the east and west drives meet was subject to alteration in the late C19 and early C20 (OS 1871, 1895, 1912), being moved to the north-east from close to the house in more than one phase. During these works the straight approach to the house was recreated in the style of that which had existed in the C17 and C18 (illustration c 1700; Rocque, 1768) from an informal arrangement, and the ha-ha was constructed.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Sutton Place (1520s-30s, listed grade I) stands towards the centre of the site, on a plateau which is surrounded on three sides by the River Wey. The two-storey mansion is brick-built with stone and terracotta dressings, and is a fine example of Tudor domestic architecture. The entrance is via the courtyard which is surrounded on three sides by the main wings of the house. The courtyard is open on the north-east side, where formerly stood a large gatehouse which closed the courtyard and was demolished in the late C18. An irregular-shaped service wing is attached to the north-west. The south-west front forms the main garden front, with the south-east front providing access to two further garden compartments.

North-west of the house and service wing stands the U-shaped stable block (C18, listed grade II), the house and stable block being divided by the stable court.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The mansion is partly enclosed by an area of formal and informal gardens arranged around a spinal terrace lawn which runs parallel and adjacent to the south-west front. To the south and west of these gardens lie the informal pleasure grounds, partly enclosed by a circuit walk and bounded to the south-west by the unimproved arm of the Wey.

A door in the south-east front gives access to the Paradise Garden, and beyond this to the Plane Tree Garden. These two areas were laid out by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe in the 1980s within late C19 or early C20 brick-walled compartments (OS 1895, 1912) which are bounded by the terrace lawn to the south-west. A rectangular canal runs along the foot of the south-east front with stepping stones across it giving access to the main area of the Paradise Garden which is laid out with a series of brick serpentine paths intersecting between lawns and borders. Adjacent to the south-east and separated by a yew hedge lies the Plane Tree Garden, laid largely to lawn with perimeter borders and dominated by a large plane tree. Two clairvoies in the walls give views out of the garden, one towards the hills to the south-east. A two-storey brick pavilion or Gloriette (1980s) occupies the south corner, enjoying long panoramic views to the south-east, south, and south-west, close by which is a gateway giving access to the south-east end of the terrace lawn. From the Gloriette the 320m long South Walk extends 100m north-west to the south-west front of the house, divided from the walls of the Paradise and Plane Tree Gardens by an herbaceous border and overlooking the open terrace lawn to the south-west. The Walk continues along the south-west front of the house, at the centre of which is a further garden door, continuing for a further 150m alongside the Terrace Lawn which is set with scattered mature specimen trees including cedars.

Opposite the garden door in the south-west front an avenue of clipped yew specimens extends across the plateau from the south-west side of the Terrace Lawn to the north-east edge of the woodland pleasure grounds. The avenue is set in lawn, flanked by clipped yew hedges, and terminates at an apsidal terrace wall above the wooded pleasure grounds, in front of which is a late C20 stone fountain. Beyond the hedged avenue are broad lawns laid out as orchards which are separated from the Terrace Lawn to the north-east by further yew hedges. This is the site of the top of Jellicoe's proposed cascade (1980s), which, had it been executed, would have continued south-west down the hillside to the river below.

The north-west end of the South Walk terminates as the Surreal Garden Walk (Jellicoe 1980s) which is bounded by the brick wall of the kitchen garden, together with a yew hedge along the south-west side. A narrowing gravel path leads north-west towards a terminating brick wall. The false perspective of the diminishing path suggests a surreal effect.

North-west of the stable block lies the almost square Pool Garden, reached via a doorway in the brick wall (listed grade II) which bounds the South Walk at this point and encloses the Garden. This compartment was enclosed in the late C19 or early C20 (OS 1895, 1912), and a rectangular swimming pool inserted between 1912 and 1934 (OS). In the 1980s Jellicoe modified the area and embellished the pool which is now (2001) enclosed by a lawn and perimeter borders. At the north corner of the enclosure stands an octagonal brick garden pavilion (C17, listed grade II) of two storeys, with a pyramidal roof. The pavilion

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has two ornamental doorways, one giving access to the Pool Garden to the south, the other giving access to the kitchen garden adjacent to the south-west. A further pavilion (late C20) has been constructed at the centre of the north-east wall of the enclosure, replacing an earlier structure (OS 1934).

From the Surreal Walk a concealed path leads through the shrubbery to the south-west back to the Terrace Lawn, at the north-west end of which lies the Nicholson Garden, one of three compartments leading off this end of the Terrace Lawn. Within the Nicholson Garden a central formal pool is surrounded by lawns while the enclosure itself is bounded by hedges, and beyond these to the north-west and north-east by the woodland of the pleasure grounds. The Garden is dominated by a large, white marble sculptural wall standing at the north-west end, which is an expanded version of Ben Nicholson's 1938 maquette *White Relief*, installed by Jellicoe in 1983. Long views extend south-east through the central entrance gap in the hedge, across the Terrace Lawn to the distant North Downs. The enclosure was laid out in the early C20 (OS 1895, 1912). Adjacent to the south-east of the Nicholson Garden lies the Ellipse Garden, laid out in the 1990s on an area of former orchard (OS 1912, 1934) by Paddy Bowe. Here a double row of pleached hornbeams set in gravel encloses an oval lawn, at the centre of which lies a circular stone pool with a stone fountain. To the south-east lies the Garden Theatre, an early C20 compartment (OS 1895, 1912) enclosed by yew hedges, adjusted by Jellicoe in the 1980s to form an open-air theatre within. A raised turf stage occupies the southern, apsidal side of the area.

From the south-west end of the yew avenue informal steps lead down to the wooded pleasure grounds set on the steep hillside above the Wey. The plateau is divided from the pleasure grounds below by a drystone retaining wall. The sloping ground is laid out with numerous grass paths amongst mature trees and ornamental shrubs which lead down to a riverside path dividing the pleasure grounds from the Wey beyond. The riverside path is in turn divided from the pleasure grounds by the open drain (part of the river system) which forms the park boundary to the east and north. The pleasure grounds were formerly linked to the formal gardens around the house by a path which led north-west from the riverside path through a belt of pleasure grounds surrounding an open paddock and back to the west end of the Terrace Lawn (OS 1870, 1934). The hillside area was laid out over formerly open parkland in the early C20 (OS 1895, 1912).

PARK The park surrounds the mansion and pleasure grounds to the north, west, and east and is largely enclosed by a drain which is connected with the River Wey system. The park is divided into northern and southern halves by the two drives. The northern half is laid partly to woodland, at the eastern end, with the rest largely occupied by pasture. It is dominated by Jellicoe's serpentine lake, which was laid out in the 1980s. The lake contains two central comma-shaped islands and is backed to the north by mature trees. The lake contains two central comma-shaped islands.

The southern half of the park is divided into west and east sections by the house and pleasure grounds. The eastern half is largely pasture and woodland. The western half is enclosed by a belt of woodland which formerly contained the pleasure-ground circuit linking the house with the riverside path (OS 1870), elements of which may still exist.

The park does not appear on Rocque's map surveyed c 1762. There is unsubstantiated information which indicates that Lancelot Brown (1716-83) may have worked at Sutton Place, but this is a tenuous link and the park does not seem to have been laid out until the C19. By the late C19 (OS 1870) it existed in much the same area that it occupies now (2001), with the area between the house and the river to the south-west forming part of the park. This area subsequently became part of the gardens and pleasure grounds.

KITCHEN GARDEN The irregularly hexagonal kitchen garden lies 50m north-west of the mansion and is enclosed by brick walls. A range of lean-to glasshouses occupy the south-west-facing sides of the three walls on the north-east, overlooking an area of lawn. To the south-west of this lawn is the main, rectangular area, divided into halves to the north-west and south-east by a late C20 iron rose pergola. The north-west half is laid out as a vegetable garden, the south-east half being laid out as a formal rose garden with the beds divided by brick paths and edged with low box hedges. A late C20 rotunda stands at the centre of the rose garden. At the east corner of the kitchen garden stands the C17 garden pavilion which overlooks this garden and the Pool Garden adjacent to the south-east. A break in the wall at this point allows access between the two gardens. The kitchen garden was laid out to designs by Paddy Bowe in the 1990s.

REFERENCES

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Maps John Rocque, Map of Surrey, surveyed c 1762, published 1768 Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, Designs for Sutton Place, 1980s (private collection) [reproduced in Spens 1992]

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870-1, published 1873 2nd edition surveyed 1895, published 1897 3rd edition surveyed 1913, published 1920 1934/5 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1871, published 1881 2nd edition surveyed 1895, published 1896 3rd edition published 1915 1934 edition

Illustrations The north-east front of Sutton Place, engraving c 1700 (reproduced in guidebook 1983)

Archival items Copies of Jekyll's planting plans (folio 28) are held on microfilm at the National Monuments Record (originals held at Reef Point, USA). Cluttons, Sale particulars, 1999 [copy on EH file]

Description written: July 2001 Amended: June 2002 Register Inspector: SR Edited: June 2002

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.