

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SULGRAVE MANOR

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

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Name: SULGRAVE MANOR

District: West Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Sulgrave

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.105835
Longitude: -1.1828129
National Grid Reference: SP 56066 45593
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001040
Date first listed: 25-Jun-1984

Details

Formal gardens laid out in 1920s by Sir Reginald Blomfield around the sometime home of the Washingtons, forefathers of George Washington, first President of the USA.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the three manors of Sulgrave was acquired in 1539 by Lawrence Washington (d 1584), a wool merchant who in 1532 had been mayor of Northampton. Soon after he rebuilt the house. That manor was purchased in 1610 by his grandson Lawrence Makepeace. The family sold it in 1659, and c 1673 it passed to the Rev Moses Hodges. His son John reunited all three of Sulgrave's manors and rebuilt the house, giving it its basic modern appearance. The Hodges family retained ownership of the house until 1840, by which time it had become a dilapidated farmhouse.

John Washington, a member of the family which owned Sulgrave although not resident there, emigrated to Virginia in 1656. His great-grandson, George (1732-99), was the first President of the United States of America. In 1914 Sulgrave Manor was purchased by subscription as a memorial to a century of peace between Britain and the USA and opened to the public. Restoration of the house and the laying out of a garden, both under Sir Reginald Blomfield, were delayed until the 1920s. It is now (1997) administered by the Sulgrave Manor Board on behalf of the peoples of Great Britain and the USA.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The village of Sulgrave is 12km north-east of Banbury, on a minor road off the B4525 Northampton Road. The Manor lies on the south-east side of the village, off Manor Road, with thatched stone cottages to front and rear. The area here registered is c 3.5ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The Manor is announced by tall, probably early C18, ironstone gate piers with ball finials on Manor Road. From these a short, straight drive runs south, terminating at a slightly sunken turning circle west of the house, from which there is access to the courtyard in its north-west angle.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Manor House (listed grade I) is an L-plan building of coursed limestone rubble and a stone-slate roof. It is of two storeys and an attic, with a gabled two-storey porch at the centre of the hall. The hall range was built c 1540(60) by Lawrence Washington, while the north-east wing was added by John Hodges c 1700. The left (west) half of the hall range, demolished c 1780, was rebuilt in 1929 by Sir Reginald Blomfield under whom the house was restored 1920-9.

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Attached to the north-west side of the house by a short wall is the former brewhouse of c 1700, remodelled by Blomfield in the 1920s. This was used as a visitor centre until 1998 when construction of a major new facility began down the west side of the gardens.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS When the Manor House was purchased in 1914 all trace of any earlier pleasure garden had disappeared. Between 1920 and c 1928 the garden was remade under the direction of Sir Reginald Blomfield (d 1942), his working drawings showing how the design evolved in several stages. Since its completion there have been very few changes.

Lining the drive off Manor Road and the turning circle are white-thorn hedges. From the east side of the drive a straight path runs east to a gravel circle adjoining the north side of the north, stone-paved, forecourt. Path and gravel circle are lined with clipped yew hedges. North of this is a paddock, Little Green.

Immediately east of the Manor, on a lawn confined to the north by a tall stone wall and to the south and east by hedges, is the Rose Garden. Low box hedges define a quartered square with central sundial (of 1579, brought to Sulgrave 1925, not in place winter 1997(8); within the beds shrubs have replaced the roses. In the north-west angle of the compartment, and opening into it, is a stone Garden House for tools designed by Blomfield. Alongside it is a lavender bed.

All the other garden compartments lie south of the house, to the east and west of whose porch are herbaceous borders. On the west side of the garden is the Terrace, a lawn set a metre above the main lawn to its east. Along its west side is a low stone wall. In its northern half is an Elizabethan-style knot garden of relatively recent date (ie post-Blomfield) and along its northern edge a herbaceous border. Fairly central is a single, over-mature walnut tree, the sole survivor of three retained by Blomfield when he redesigned the gardens.

There are steps with stumpy piers off the east side of the Terrace, towards its south end and at the north-east corner. The latter lead down to the west end of the straight gravel path which runs across the south front of the house and the south end of the Rose Garden, on the east side of which it terminates at the head of steps with short stone balustrades to either side which lead down to the Kitchen Garden. From the porch a second path runs off south, at right-angles to the first, as the main axial path down the garden. This crosses the western half of the main flat lawn, the Bowling Green, which has 2m high yew hedges to east and south with stone piers at the corners. At either end of the path is a pair of birds in clipped yew topiary work.

On the south side of the Bowling Green, steps flanked by tall gate piers surmounted with ornamental balls carry the axial path up to the Orchard (laid out and planted 1927(8), which is contained within a 1.5m high yew hedge with demi-lune to the south. The axial path carries across this to a wooden bench set in an apse at the apex of the demi-lune. Within the orchard are several rows of mature, standard apple trees. Slips to east and west of the demi-lune contain modern sheds.

KITCHEN GARDEN The long, thin, Kitchen Garden, still used for vegetable growing in 1998, lies east of the Bowling Green and the Rose Garden, hidden from the house behind their hedges. The north end of the Kitchen Garden has taken in a Herb Garden and (at the north end) a Rock Garden shown on a plan of 1933 (Clifford-Smith 1933, 163).

REFERENCES

Country Life, 71 (25 June 1932), pp 722(8 H Clifford Smith, Sulgrave Manor and the Washingtons (1933) J Anthony, The Gardens of Britain 6, (1979), pp 154-7 Sulgrave Manor, Northamptonshire, guidebook, (1997)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1900 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900

Archival items Blomfield's drawings and book of specifications are held at Sulgrave Manor.

Description written: 1998 Register Inspector: PAS Edited: January 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.