



BRIEF HISTORY OF

Groombridge Place

The house standing today at Groombridge Place was built in 1662, replacing an earlier moated castle on the site. Much of the house along with the bridges and moat gates were designed by renowned architect Sir Christopher Wren who rebuilt London after the Great Fire and is most notable for redesigning St Pauls cathedral.

The first recorded owner of a Manor at Groombridge was William Russell, a Baron, who was granted Lordship of the Manor in the early 1230s. Twelve different families have lived in the house since that time, including the Earls of Clinton and the Earls of Dorset. The most famous resident is Thomas Sackville, cousin of Elizabeth I and Lord High Treasurer of England from 1599 to 1608.

The house as we see it today was rebuilt by Philip Packer, a Courtier of Charles II, who was also responsible for laying out the formal gardens. They were designed with help from renowned horticulturalist John Evelyn, and the grid layout has remained unchanged since it was first devised in the 1670s.

The Groombridge Place estate is approximately 250 acres and includes a canal, vineyard, arable farmland, and area of ancient woodland. The canal is a diversion of the river Grom (which flows from Tunbridge Wells to the Medway), created to feed the moat, and the village millpond. There was a working farm on the site until 1970, and the buildings in the courtyard area of the site- the restaurant, shop and office - are all original farm buildings, some dating back to the 1600s.

The house remains a private residence and is currently home to the Bodle family who have owned the Groombridge estate for over 20 years; the gardens, canal and forest have been open to the public since the 1990s. Groombridge Manor was recently voted loveliest House in the South East of England by readers of the Daily Telegraph and Country Life.

The Groombridge Place estate has connections with world-famous novelist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of detective Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle was good friends with the sisters Sophia, Louisa and Eliza Saint, who lived at Groombridge Place during the late 1800s. He visited the estate often, using it as the setting of his last Sherlock Holmes novel - 'The Valley of Fear'- although renaming it 'Birlstone Manor' for the purposes of the book.

The house and gardens were also used for the home of the Bennet family - Longbourn House in Jo Wrights 2005 film adaptation of Pride & Prejudice starring Keira Knightley.



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The 17th Century Formal Gardens



GROOMBRIDGE PLACE

Enchanted Forest & Gardens

1 Entrance/ The Gift Shop/ First Aid Point

2 Conan-Doyle Museum / Mini-Theatre

3 Drunken Garden

A favourite of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle the garden is described in his 1915 book the valley of the fear. Amongst the yew and conifer topiary gives the feeling of organic shapes coming out the movement of the mist. Soft perennial flowers and grasses are all around the clock fountain centrepiece.

4 Oriental Garden

A beautiful collection of unusual oriental and oriental inspired plant beautifully shaded by magnificent acers - look out for the dead man's fingers!

5 Draughtsman Lawn

Features the white mulberry tree planted in 1993 to mark Groombridge's connection with the smuggling trade.

6 Knot Garden

Boast a wonderful display of tulips during the spring. In the summer the bright and beautiful colourful plants are a sight to behold.

7 Giant Chessboard

The giant chessboard will entertain visitors of all ages in the shade of an ancient yew planted in 1415 by Sir Richard Waller after his return from the battle of Agincourt.

8 White Rose Garden

The garden boast over 20 species of Roses underplanted with White and Silver plants. Beautifully fragrant perennials are a treat for the senses.

9 Secret Garden

Find the secret door by the edge of the moat that leads to this hidden garden, the garden is beautifully shaded and peaceful where the stream babbles down into the moat. A delicate Pink cherry tree covers the ground with its confetti during the spring months.

10 Ice Cream Parlour

11 Golden Key Maze

12 Peacock Bistro

13 Canal Boat Jetty (13a-b Single Trip)

14 Fire Assembly Point



The Enchanted Forest

- 15 Birds of Prey Show Field
- 16 Crusoe's World & Refreshments
- 17 The Cowboy Fort
- 18 The Mystic Pool
- 19 The Double Spiral
- 20 The Standing Stone
- 21 Treetops Walkway - Start **NEW**
- 22 Little Groms Village
- 23 The Serpent's Lair
- 24 The Romany Camp

- 25 Blue Pool
- 26 Teepee Village
- 27 Totem Pole
- 28 Treetops Walkway - End
- 29 Tree Fern Valley
- 30 The Swing Walk & Family Giant Nest Swings **NEW**
- 31 Boardwalk Adventure
- 32 Deer Park
- 33 Vineyard

P Parking **WC** Toilet