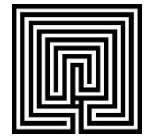


# Julian and Troy Names

Michael Behrend



*Originally published in Caerdroia 27 (1996), p.18-23*

In *Caerdroia* 26, John Wall published a detailed account of Lincolnshire turf mazes.<sup>1</sup> Here I would like to add a few odd pieces of information and take up some of the points on which he invites comment. Mr Wall quotes an ambiguous note about the Alkborough maze (fig.1) that the antiquary Abraham de la Pryme wrote in his diary in 1697:

They have at [this] town, as also at Appleby, two Roman games, the one called Gillian's bore, and the other Troy's walls.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Wall recognizes that this could mean two mazes at each town but thinks that "the context makes it clear" that there was only one. Nevertheless, a reference to Appleby which de la Pryme made in a letter of 1699<sup>3</sup> suggests that the first interpretation is the correct one. The passage as it was published in 1700 reads:

Entring then into Appelby-lane, the Street leads thro[ugh] the West end of the Town, at which Town is two old Roman Games yet practis'd, (tho very imperfectly) the one call'd Julian's Bower, and the other Troy's Walls.<sup>4</sup>

If it is accepted that de la Pryme saw two mazes at Appleby, and therefore also at Alkborough, the number of known turf maze sites in Lincolnshire goes up from four to six.



*Figure 1: The Julian's Bower turf labyrinth, Alkborough. Photo: Jeff Seward*

Mr Wall wishes to rehabilitate Stukeley's derivation of the name Julian Bower from Iulus Ascanius in the *Aeneid*. He writes:

Those who dispute Stukeley's conclusion and claim that all Julian Bowers are to be dated after the Conquest should be able to offer a convincing alternative explanation for the name, and for the 'coincidence' that all are to be found at or near Roman sites

I do not wish to deny altogether the possibility that turf mazes were introduced into Britain by the Romans. Pliny apparently refers to them when he says that the Egyptian labyrinth was not like the ones seen in pavements or in boys' games in the fields, with a narrow strip containing many miles of walks.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand Trollope, in his well-known paper,<sup>9</sup> argues for the ecclesiastical origin of turf mazes, supporting his arguments by the circumstance "that most, if not all, of our English turf mazes are situated in the vicinity of a church or chapel, or in localities where it may appear probable that some sacred structure once existed." The arguments of Stukeley and Trollope are similar, but both cannot be valid. Perhaps the "coincidences" occur because Roman sites and Christian sites are both so common in England?

Whatever the origin of Julian Bower names may be, it is interesting that in his letter de la Pryme records another Julian name near the Roman road (Ermine Street) through Appleby:

This street, or cause[wa]y, ... runs by the fields of Hibberston [Hibaldstow], in which fields, not farr of[f] this street, is the foundations of many Roman buildings to be seen, as is manifest from their tile there found, and tradition says there hath been a citty and castle there; and there are two springs, the one called Julian's Stony Well, and the other Castleton Well, and there are several old Roman coins found there.

Hibaldstow, 12 kilometres south of Appleby, is named as a minor settlement on the O.S. map of Roman Britain. The "wells" are the springs at the modern Staniwells pumping station on the west side of the Street.

For an alternative explanation of the name Julian's Bower, I will refer my earlier article in *Caerdroia* 15<sup>10</sup> and just add one or two points here. John Kraft's study<sup>11</sup> shows that in various cultures there are games or legends in which a maze has to be traversed in order to reach a girl or princess at the centre. The *Caerdroia* piece suggested independently that such traditions account for the term Gillian's Bower - Gillian being taken as a typical girl's name. The name Julian's Bower does not seem to be recorded before 1536,<sup>12</sup> and in early modern English has a simple meaning which is related to maze traditions. So there seems to be little reason to derive it from a Roman term. Indeed, it seems unlikely that the name Julian's Bower is of pre-Conquest origin. Although the sound of *j* or soft *g* existed in Old English, it never occurred at the beginning of a word. A search in an etymological dictionary will show that practically all English words beginning with this sound are of post-Conquest (mostly French or Latin) origin.

Mr Wall says "Even if it is conceded that the first element in Julian's Bower is in some instances feminine, it is difficult to account for the near-contemporary occurrence of both Julian and Gillian (or its variants) attached to the same site." There is evidence, however, that in the time of de la Pryme and Stukeley both pronunciations were in use. In the "Alphabetical Spelling Dialogue" in Jones's *Practical Phonography*,<sup>13</sup> published in 1701, one of the questions is "When is the sound of *i* written *u*?" to which the answer is "When it may be sounded *u* as in *Arthur, busy, business, Gladuse, Julian, (a Woman's Name) manufacture, manuscript.*" This shows that around 1700 some people pronounced Julian as spelt, whereas some pronounced it Jillian. This does not apply to other meanings of Julian, e.g. as an adjective from Julius, so the existence of Gillian Bower alongside Julian Bower suggests that the first word is indeed the woman's name.

The same variation in sound occurs in place names that have nothing to do with mazes. E.g. Julians at Rushden, Hertfordshire, takes its name from Lady Juliana Bealknap, who was granted land there in 1390; the name appears as Julyons in 1602 but Gillions in 1676.<sup>14</sup>

The Julian's Bower at Alkborough lies just to the north of a large earthwork, which (as discussed in John Wall's article) may or may not be Roman. De la Pryme has a note on this structure. just before his note on the maze:<sup>2</sup>

Tradition says that there lived formerly at Alkburrow a famous heroic princes[s], who did many martial actions. They say that she had a huge hall in that piece of ground which I have described before to be a Roman fortification, and says that the place is call'd Countess Close from her....

This tradition is similar to one in southern France, where "the ruins of the Roman amphitheatres... are called the 'palais de Galienne', Galienne being a powerful Moorish princess and the wife of Charlemagne."<sup>15</sup> The earlier article<sup>10</sup> suggested that the name Julian's Bower may be connected somehow with the Gallants or Galleon's Bowers of Devon, and with a medieval story that Merlin created a magical bower for his mistress Galyan. We may also think of the name Maiden Bower, applied to certain prehistoric earthworks in Britain. This folklore motif of a lady associated with ancient earthworks might be worth investigating further.

The classical lady in the labyrinth is Helen of Troy, and that brings us to the names Troytown and Troy's Walls which are used for some English turf mazes. Mr Wall asks what the origin of Troy names can be, if we deny that the mazes are of Roman origin. Clearly some explanation of such names is required, though one may ask why, if Troy names are of Roman origin, they occur in Denmark, Sweden and Finland - countries which were never part of the Roman empire. John Kraft, in an account of Swedish labyrinths, includes seven to which the name Troienborg or the like is applied.<sup>16</sup> The same writer,<sup>19</sup> gives a list of 35 Troy names in Denmark (including the former Danish territory in southern Sweden), although only a few of these can be said definitely to belong to labyrinths. Further north, the name Trojenborg is applied to stone labyrinths in the Finnish islands in the Gulf of Bothnia.<sup>20</sup>

As Staffan Lundén emphasizes in *Caerdroia* 26, mazes are often given the names of destroyed cities.<sup>21</sup> In Finland, apart from the Troy names, mazes are called Destruction of Jerusalem, City of Nineveh, and Jericho.<sup>20</sup> In Russia, around the White Sea, they are called Babylon.<sup>22</sup> Near Viborg in eastern Finland is recorded the name Lissabon,<sup>20</sup> i.e. Lisbon, which is especially interesting in this connexion. Lisbon was destroyed by a tremendous earthquake on 1 November 1755. The shock caused oscillations of the water in lakes (seiches) as far away as Norway and Sweden, although the shock itself was certainly not felt there<sup>23</sup>. Tazieff says "the ten thousand lakes of Finland" were set in motion and adds that it is this "extraordinary phenomenon" of the seiches that makes the Lisbon earthquake such "an entirely exceptional occurrence."<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, books in English give little information about the seiches in Scandinavia, but it seems likely that the phenomenon would have impressed people deeply, as it did in Britain.<sup>25</sup> I suggest that this is how Lisbon was fixed in people's minds as a destroyed city, so that its name was applied to labyrinths. Perhaps readers in Scandinavia could investigate this; of course, the theory is disproved if the name was in use before 1755.

In Europe, Troy is a famous example of a destroyed city. Today, most people's knowledge of the Trojan legend is derived from Homer, whose work was little read in the Middle Ages. But it is a mistake to suppose, as some writers have done, that the legend was little known at that time. If we read up on medieval literature we find that it was very well known, but from a different source. Around the fifth century there appeared two Latin works purporting to be translations of eyewitness accounts of the fall of Troy. One was attributed to Dictys of Crete, a warrior on the Greek side; the

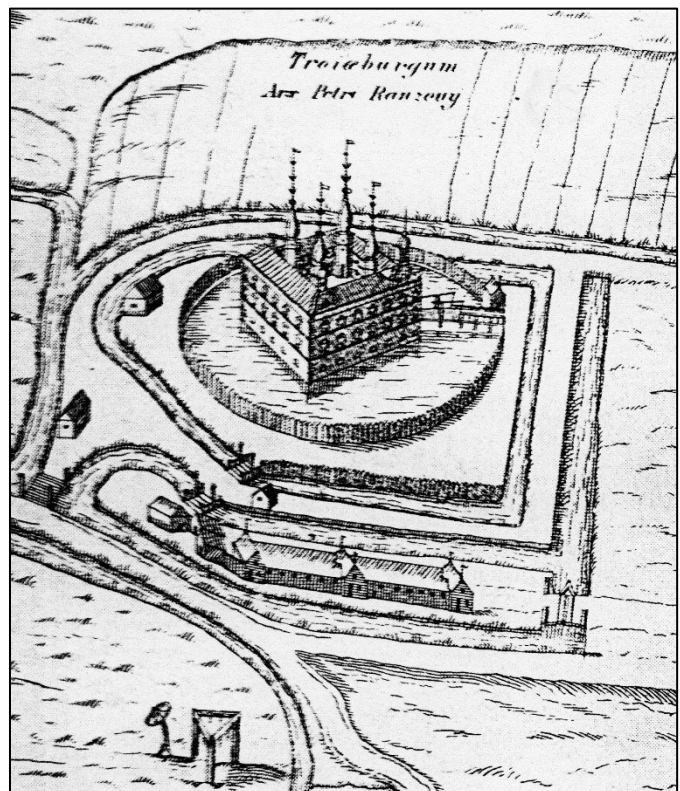
other to Dares of Phrygia, a priest in Troy. Of course, these works are now considered spurious (though they may indeed be translations of Greek versions several centuries older), but in the Middle Ages they were considered reliable history - in contrast to Homer with his stories of gods joining in the battles - and were expanded into the romance of Troy, which “exercised greater influence in its day and for centuries after its appearance than any other work of the same class.”<sup>26</sup>

Accounts of the Troy romances can easily be found in libraries, so to be brief: the most influential works were the 12<sup>th</sup> century French *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte More (or Maure), and a late 13<sup>th</sup> century translation of this into Latin, the *Historia Trojana* by Guido of Colonna. Guido’s version was immensely popular and was the basis for versions of the story in German, Italian, English, Scots, French, Spanish, Low Saxon, Dutch, Danish, Flemish and Bohemian. (For a Troy name in Prague, see Nigel Pennick’s article in *Caerdroia* 24.<sup>29</sup>) There was also an Irish version even before Benoît, and an Icelandic *Trojumanna Saga*. A French version of Guido, Raoul le Fèvre’s *Recueil des Histoires de Troyes*, was translated by William Caxton and published by him in 1474 - the first book printed in English.

Knowledge of the Troy romances and others would not have been confined to those who could read. Professional story-tellers travelled from place to place with their harps, reciting the stories with musical accompaniment; or at a feast or other gathering, one of the company might read aloud to the crowd.<sup>30</sup> The first Troy romances in English appeared relatively late, about 1350-1400.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps this is because the decline of the French language in England in the 14th century<sup>32</sup> first made it worthwhile to produce English version of these lengthy poems (though there are plenty of earlier romances in English on other subjects).

The book by Margaret Scherer shows illustrations taken from various manuscripts of the Troy romances, and scenes from the legend in 15th-century paintings and tapestries.<sup>33</sup> She writes “The Troy romances were echoed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in such simplified, popular forms as ballads and chapbooks, the precursors of today’s ‘comic’ books.” An illustration shows two chapbooks of *The History of Hector, Prince of Troy*, dating from 1728 and 1769. Long-time *Caerdroia* readers may recall the ballad of “The Wandering Prince of Troy”, dating from 1707 and reproduced in an early issue.<sup>35</sup>

The suggestion that Troy names in Europe are derived from medieval romances was made long ago by the German writer Johannes Hoops,<sup>36</sup> and taken up by the editors of the Danish place name series<sup>37</sup> to explain the name Trøjborg in the Visby district (number 31 in John Kraft’s list<sup>19</sup>). This is the name of a castle (fig. 2), now in ruins, which was built in the late 16th century on an earlier site; it is said that the way to the centre was by a zigzag route across the moat.<sup>38</sup> The name, in the form Trøjborgh, is first recorded in 1347.



**Figure 2: The castle of Trøjborg in Slesvig, Denmark, as depicted in Braun’s Atlas, 1597 (from ref. 38)**

Apart from the popularity of the Troy romances, the Troy legend was important in the European Middle Ages because people firmly believed that descendants of Trojan refugees had founded nations in Europe. The story of Brutus, the supposed great-grandson of Aeneas and founder of the British nation, is told for example in Latin by Nennius (9<sup>th</sup> century, briefly) and Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1136, at length), and in English in Layamon's *Brut* (late 12<sup>th</sup> century). It was still appearing in chapbooks as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Evans noted in 1740 that:

...nothing is more common among the Welsh than the belief that this island was first settled from Caer-droea.<sup>34</sup>

i.e. Troy, and he gives this as the reason why Welsh shepherds still cut the shape of Caer-droea on the summit of every hill and mountain.

Here we remember that, as Jeff Saward has described, the maze symbol appears among native peoples in Arizona in myths of creation or of the emergence of ancestors from the underworld.<sup>39</sup> Staffan Lundén writes of a similar story from Nepal: the ruling dynasty of Batgao originated (in fact) from the destroyed city of Simraongarh, which (in legend) had the form of a labyrinth.<sup>21</sup>

So, I suggest, as a partial answer to Mr Wall's inquiry, that Troy names for mazes arose from the popularity of the Troy legend in the Middle Ages. After all, Biblical names for labyrinths (Jerusalem, Jericho, Nineveh, Babylon) must date from the Christian era, so why not Troy also? Troy was probably the best-known destroyed city in the Middle Ages. But why are labyrinths so often named after destroyed cities? That is another question.

Michael Behrend, Cambridge, England; 1996

#### Notes and References:

1. Wall, John. "Lincolnshire Turf Mazes" *Caerdroia* 26 (1993), p.24-38. Reprinted from *Lincolnshire Past and Present*, no.10/11, pp.3-11 and no.12, pp.3-8 (1993).
2. Jackson, Charles, ed. *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme*. Surtees Society, 1870, p.164.
3. *Ibid.*, p.211.
4. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 22, p.564 (April 1700). The words "tho very imperfectly" have been added to the letter.
5. Pliny. *Natural History*, book 36, ch.19: "non - ut in pavimentis puerorumve ludicris campestribus videmus - brevi lacinia milia passuum plura continente". Pliny's terse Latin has been interpreted in various ways: mazes "similar, probably, to the one at Hampton Court"<sup>6</sup> or "Pliny is referring to the *Lusus Troiae*, the ceremonial 'ride' performed by boys in the *Campus Martius*."<sup>7</sup> But the noted translator Philemon Holland (1552-1637) writes "mazes which are drawne upon the pavement and plain floore of a field, such as we commonly see serve to make sport and pastime among boies, that is to say, which within a little compass and round border comprehend many miles."<sup>8</sup> The addition "round border" suggests that he had in mind the English turf mazes of his own day.
6. Translation: Bostock J. & H.T. Riley, 1857, vol.6, p.340n.
7. Translation: Eichholz D.E., 1962, vol.10, p.68n.
8. *The Historie of the World, commonly called the Naturall Historie of C. Plinius Secundus*. Translation: Holland P., London, 1601, vol.2, p.578.
9. Trollope, Rev. Edward. "Notices of Ancient and Mediæval Labyrinths" *Archaeological Journal*, vol.XV (1858), pp.216-235, esp. p.227.
10. Behrend, Michael. "Julian Bowers" *Caerdroia* 15 (1984), pp.4-7.
11. Kraft, John. *The Goddess in the Labyrinth*. Åbo Akademi, Åbo, Sweden, 1985.
12. At Louth, as noted in Wall <sup>1</sup> (the date 1504 in the *Caerdroia* reprint should be 1544, as in the original).

13. Jones, John. *Practical Phonography*. London, 1701, p.60 (ed. E. Ekwall, with facsimile, 1907).
14. Gover, J.E.B. et al. *The Place-names of Hertfordshire*. Cambridge, 1938, p.164.
15. Krappe, Alexander. *The Science of Folklore*. New York, 1946, p.75.
16. Kraft, John. "Labyrinths in Pagan Sweden" *Caerdroia* 21 (1987), pp.12-24: Troy names at Skånninge, Linköping, Himmelstalund, Tibble, Rösaring, Old Uppsala, and Viby. For more about Linköping and Rösaring see refs. 17 & 18 respectively.
17. Kraft, John (1991) "Linköping" *Caerdroia* 24 (1991), pp.51-52.
18. Saward, Deb. "The Rösaring Road" *Caerdroia* 18 (1986), pp.4-6.
19. Kraft, John. "Turf labyrinths in Southern Scandinavia" *Caerdroia* 15 (1984), pp.14-21.
20. Aspelin, J.R. "Steinlabyrinthe in Finnland" *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 9, (1877), pp.439-441: refers to the islands off Åbo (Turku) and the Åland Islands (Ahvenanmaa).
21. Lundén, Staffen. "A Nepalese Labyrinth" *Caerdroia* 26 (1993), p.13-22.
22. von Baer, E. "Ueber labyrinth-förmige Steinsetzungen im Russischen Norden" *Bulletin de la Classe historico-philologique de l'Académie des Sciences de St Pétersbourg* 1 (1844), cols.70-79 (extract translated in *Caerdroia* 11 (1982), pp.3-8).
23. Eiby, G.A. *Earthquakes*. London, 1967, p.141.
24. Tazieff, H. *When the Earth Shook*. London, 1964, p.84.
25. See e.g. Andrews, Allen. *Earthquake*. London, 1963, p.80, and Verney, Peter. *The Earthquake Handbook*. New York & London, 1979, p.115.
26. Anon. in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th. edn. (1911), vol.27, pp.317-318. For more recent accounts, see e.g. refs 27 & 28.
27. Benson, C. David. *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1980.
28. Myrick, Leslie Diane. *From the De Excidio Troiae Historia to the Togail Troí*. Heidelberg, 1993, pp.21-52.
29. Pennick, Nigel. "A Hedge Maze in Prague" *Caerdroia* 24 (1991), p.18.
30. E.g. in the English romance *Havelok* (c.1300 CE), which is itself obviously meant to be recited in company, one pastime at Havelok's coronation feast in Denmark is "romanz reding on the bok" (line 2327).
31. Wells, John Edwin. *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*. Yale Univ. Press, 1906, pp.106-111.
32. Baugh, A.C. and Cable, T. *A History of the English Language*, 3rd edn., London, 1978, pp.143-150: e.g. English introduced into schools 1349, parliament opened in English 1362.
33. Scherer, Margaret R. *The Legends of Troy in Art and Literature*. New York & London, 1964.
34. Evans, Theophilus (1740). *Drych y pryf Oesoedd*, pt.1, ed. Samuel J.Evans, Bangor & London, 1902, p.24.
35. Nall, G. "A proper new ballad, intituled The Wandering Prince of Troy" *Caerdroia* 7 (1981), pp.21-22.
36. Hoops, Johannes. "Troiaburg" in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, vol.4 (1918-19), p.365.
37. Stednavneudvalget [Placename Commission]. *Danmarks Stednavne*, nr.5. Copenhagen, 1933, pp.284-285.
38. Jørgensen, Bent. *Dansk Stednavneleksikon*. Copenhagen, 1983, vol.3, p.136.
39. Saward, Jeff. "The House of Itoi" *Caerdroia* 22 (1989), pp.30-38.
40. Robinson, David N. "Julian's Bower" *Lincolnshire Life* 9, nr.3 (May 1969), pp.28-29.

*The text and illustrations in this reprint are © Labyrinthos/Michael Behrend 2018 as appropriate. Personal copies are permitted, but permission must be sought for any commercial reproduction: [www.labyrinthos.net](http://www.labyrinthos.net)*