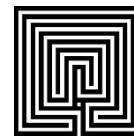


A Note on Water Mazes

Jeff Seward



Originally published in Caerdroia 29 (1998), p.34

Although the notion has been around for some time, as the recent discovery of a water maze at Greenwich in the early 1600's attests, surprisingly few examples have been recorded since that time. The Greenwich maze has long gone, as has Minotaur Design's "Beatles Maze," an innovative water maze installed at the Liverpool Garden Festival in England in 1984. It featured a 51 foot (15.5 metres) yellow submarine at the centre of an apple shaped brick pathway set in a large pond. The only permanent water maze in Britain, until recently, was the example in Victoria Park, Bristol. Also created in 1984, and more a piece of brick sculpture than a practical maze, its design is based on the late 14th century labyrinth roof boss in nearby St. Mary Redcliffe Church.



The Bristol Water Maze. Photo: Jeff Seward

The Jersey Water Maze, opened in July 1997, is a splendid hi-tech example of the type, located in St Helier, on the island of Jersey, off the northwest coast of France. Computer controlled pumps maintain multiple 'walls' of water, defining the plan of the maze by spraying jets up through grilles set into an otherwise flat paved area. The same grilles collect the water for re-circulation. 'Walls' are turned on and off in a programmed sequence, allowing access to subsequent cells within the sectioned, concentric circuits.



The Jersey Water Maze. Photo: Adrian Fisher

Also opened in July 1997, the new water maze at Hever Castle is another delightful addition to the slim catalogue of water mazes here in the British Isles. 88 feet (27 metres) in diameter, three circuits of stepping stone paths are separated by aquatic plantings, with paths barred by jets of water. At the centre, steps to the top of the tower provide an elevated view of the maze and a direct, and dry, route out of the maze. On a recent sunny afternoon visit I noticed several squealing groups of children tackle the maze. Daring each other to jump through the curtains of water, they mostly ended-up thoroughly soaked and seemed pleased with the maze! With the traditional style hedge maze, planted 1905, also open to the public, this pair of contrasting mazes makes Hever Castle a firm favourite for visiting maze enthusiasts.

Jeff Seward, Thundersley, England; May 1998



The Hever Castle Water Maze. Photo: Hever Castle Ltd.

Notes:

Outside of Britain, I know of modern examples in Bonn, Germany (see *Caerdroia* 23 (1990), p.20), a water conduit in a shopping precinct; and a group of small decorative water mazes at the Kildeskovshallen in Gentofte, Denmark (see *Caerdroia* 24 (1991), p.46). There are also two historic examples from the Islamic world, the first at Meknès, Morocco and another from Damascus, Syria: both are decorative water features in palaces.

The text and illustrations in this reprint are © Labyrinthos/Jeff Seward 2020 as appropriate. Personal copies are permitted, but permission must be sought for any commercial reproduction: www.labyrinthos.net