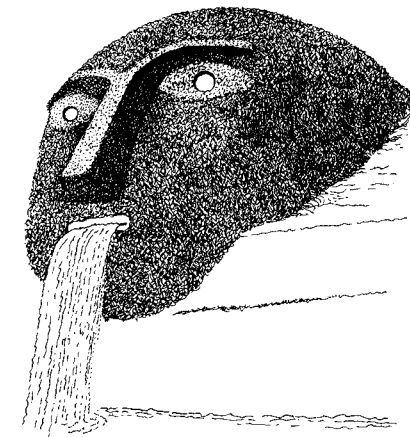


Swarovski

Labyrinth in Form einer Hand, Swarovski Kristallwelten, Wattens, Austria

Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) | 2013–15



An alpine giant with crystal eyes and a tongue of running water guards a subterranean world, known as the Chambers of Wonder.

Most visitors to the Swarovski crystal factory in the Tyrolean mountains of Austria probably want to see crystals. They want to see how they are cut – possibly through a glass window – and they wish to come away with a better understanding of Swarovski’s history. This is certainly the tone of some of the comments gleaned from tourism websites. But instead, Swarovski fans are treated to something they did not ask for: art.

Children have the right attitude: while one child-free visitor arrived and left in less than an hour, a grateful family said that they spent all day there and that the garden, with its four-storey climbing tower, was the highlight of their trip. It is the most visited destination in Austria, after the historical draw of the Schönbrunn Palace (see pages 112–13).

The maze (which was added as part of an expansion of the park in 2013–15, along with the climbing structure) might provide a clue to its success as a tourist attraction. It looks something like a henna hand of Hamsa, although it was inspired by the left hand of

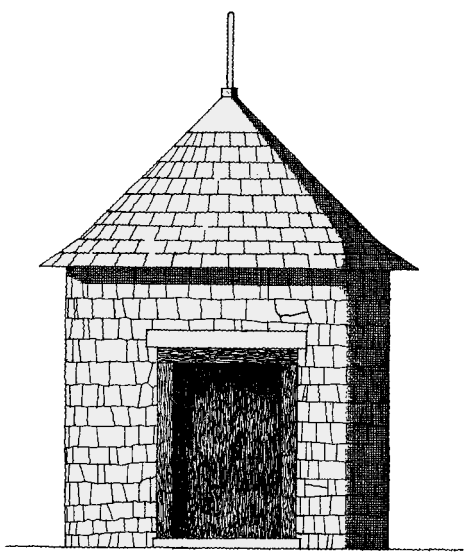
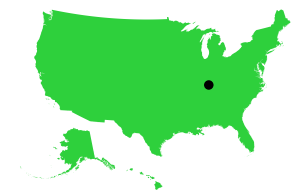
André Heller, the creative force behind the attractions of the crystal factory. A sign at the entrance reads: ‘Come in! This is the hand of André.’ Even if you do not know who André is (a singer, poet, actor and author with a lucrative sideline in landscaping and more), the hand is disarming. Nearby, an alpine giant with crystal eyes and a tongue of running water guards a subterranean world, originally curated by Heller as the Chambers of Wonder. Here, artists respond to crystal. Did you know that Andy Warhol made a piece called *Gems* in 1978? It’s here. Brian Eno’s artwork *55 Million Crystals* (1980) is an ‘absolutely unique original’. Eno may be outshone by Thomas Feuerstein, however: ‘the sculpture *Leviathan* refers to the biblical sea monster on one hand,’ we are told, ‘and, on the other, to the eponymous publication by Thomas Hobbes from 1651 about government and the state.’ As with the maze, either you like it or you don’t.



New Harmony

New Harmony Maze, New Harmony, Indiana, USA

Yew (*Taxus baccata*) | 1814



The exterior of the grotto was rough and earthy, while its interior was a preview of heavenly riches.

The original maze at New Harmony was built in the early days of Indiana statehood by a German-speaking religious commune. Although it is a maze, it was traditionally known as the New Harmony Labyrinth, one of three built by the same group in three model towns: Harmony, New Harmony and Economy. The name of the last settlement was a reference to Divine Economy (and the imminent reappearance of Jesus Christ on Earth), but the industrious Harmonists were noted for their rapid earthly prosperity wherever they set up shop. Their code of celibacy brought them more attention, causing some disharmony before their inevitable demise.

The builder of the labyrinth was Frederick Rapp, adopted son of the sect's charismatic leader, Johann Georg Rapp. He used his skill in architecture, town-planning and accounting to build a framework of decent dwellings and places of work on the Western Frontier, which was truly wild as well as war-torn. Skirmishes between new Americans, native Americans and post-revolutionary

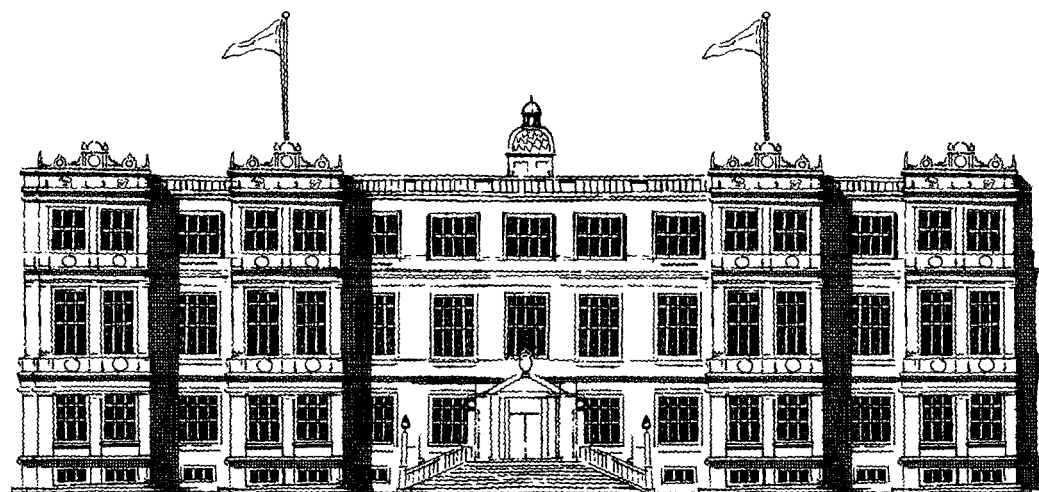
British were destabilizing and eventually proved too much for the Harmonists, who had moved over from Pennsylvania before moving back again. During each stint they prepared for the Second Coming, finding that a change of location focused the mind and might even prove to be a catalyst for that great event.

Frederick Rapp's town-planning may have been influenced by Christianapolis, the German theologian Johann Valentin Andreae's early seventeenth-century vision of a grid-like utopia with high walls. The hedge labyrinth at New Harmony (remade in 2008) enclosed its own sense of order and destiny, and was planted in a wonderful garden of trees and vines, with plentiful fruit and flowers. It was a new Garden of Eden, the best place in the New World to receive the returning Son of God. A circular, rough-clad grotto stood at its centre. Inside, the walls were cool and smooth, and reports suggest that it was brightly coloured and even bejewelled, an earthly preview of the riches of Heaven.

The *Harmonists* made this labyrinth as a new *Garden of Eden*, originally planted with fruiting shrubs and flowering trees including currants, hazels and American dogwood.

Longleat

Hedge Maze, Sun Maze and Lunar Labyrinth, Longleat, Wiltshire, UK
Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and six wooden bridges | 1996, 1975



Longleat House in Wiltshire, the first English stately home to open its doors to the public.

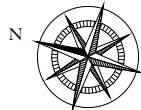
How much symbolism can be put into a maze? Two of the several mazes constructed on the large estate of Longleat might just hold the answer. When the renowned maze-maker Randall Coate (1909–2005) was asked by the Marquess of Bath to jolly up the view under his bedroom window, Coate obliged (in 1996) with a giant sun. Except that it is also a Minotaur. And Bacchus. If you know what you are looking for, standing on the East Terrace, you will also see Neptune’s trident; Ariadne’s thread; the ship, helmet and sword of Theseus; and a labrys, the double-edged axe that is a symbol not only of Crete but also of the strong allegiance to female deities on that island.

Many of the scores of mazes Coate created around the world in the second half of his life had a feeling of symmetry, their multifaceted convolutions contained in a neat shape. Actual symmetry was impossible, however, since there was too much to communicate. Yet the complexity of the Sun Maze is beautifully balanced at Longleat

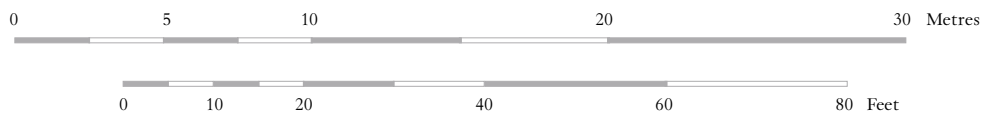
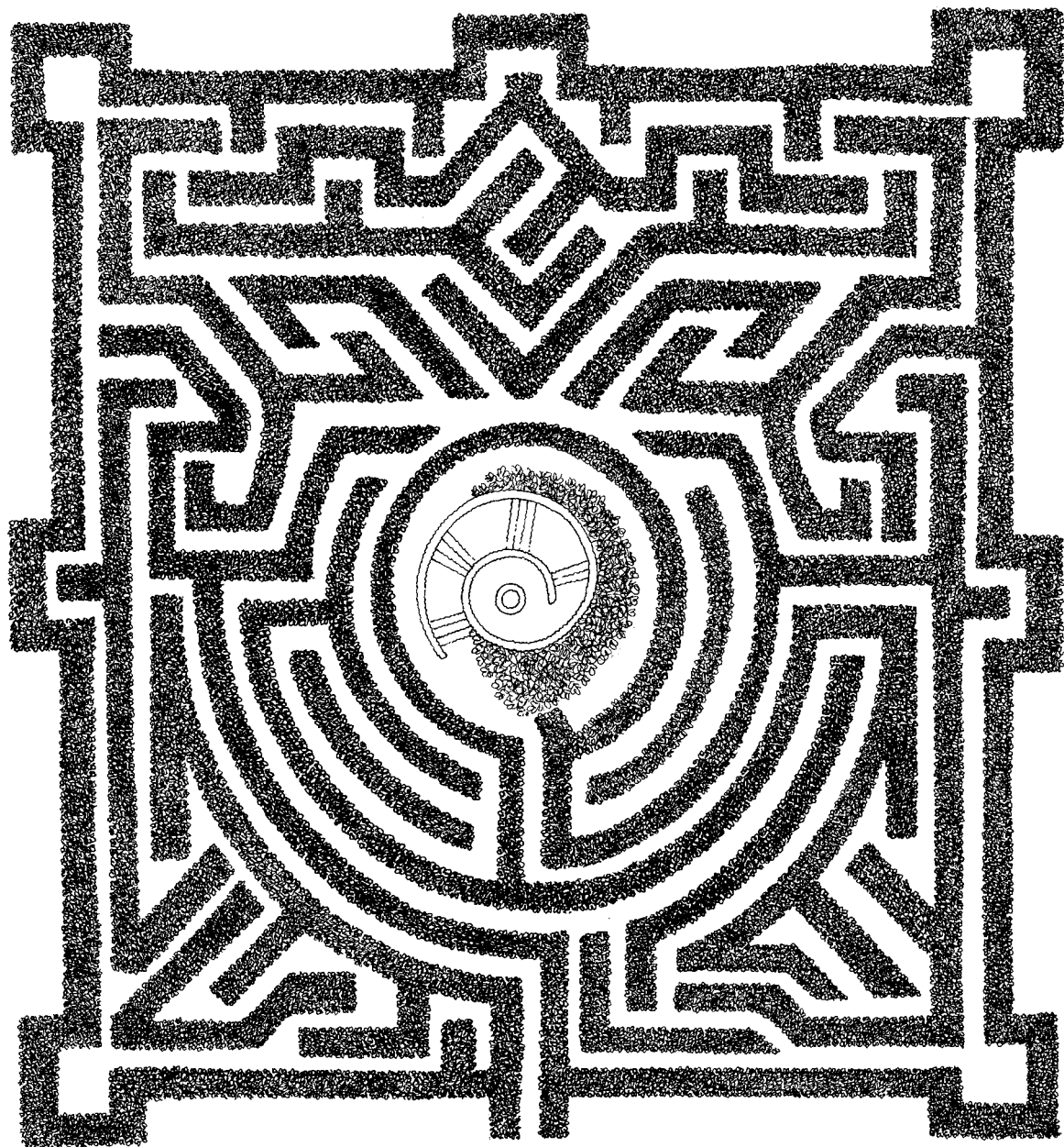
with the Lunar Labyrinth, added at the same time. Coate described this pairing as a ‘unique juxtaposition’, and with a receptive client in Lord Bath, the opportunity for this yin–yang duality must have been compelling.

Beside the fundamental contrast of day and night, sun and moon, the two designs laid out side by side form a simple visual response to that niggling question: what is the difference between a maze and a labyrinth? Coate answered it eloquently in words, too, evoking the ‘dizzy gyrations of the maze with its multiple routes and wrong turnings’ versus the ‘linear purity of the labyrinth’.

Purity of line belies the labyrinth’s complexity. In Coate’s correspondence with Bath he wrote of the need to convey ‘the feeling of night in the Minotaur’s prison’. The crescent refers not only to the moon but also to the wing-span of Icarus; even the pointed turns at the end of each circuit symbolize the tips of the waxed feathers used by Daedalus to make the wings for himself and his ill-fated son.



The *central ‘goal’* of a maze is generally overlooked; this one, however, is equipped with a viewing mound over a grotto, through which you must exit to *return to civilization*.



Leeds Castle

Maidstone, Kent, England
Yew (*Taxus baccata*) | 1987



A gothic grotesque carved from tufa, in the grotto beneath the maze at Leeds Castle.

The maze at Leeds Castle in Kent is a modern one, planned using a computer by the maze designer Adrian Fisher. A crown-and-sceptre design refers to the line of medieval queens who made their home at Leeds, but it is the innovative central goal that steals the show. The reward is a Gothic mound followed by an extraordinary underground grotto, which must be passed through before the visitor gains the long tunnel to the exit. It makes the absence of excitement in the middle of other mazes seem to be a fundamental omission.

When the Trustees of Leeds Castle hired the master stone-carver Simon Verity to decorate the subterranean chamber, he brought with him a team of artists and visionaries with a strong appreciation of eighteenth-century garden vernacular. The grotto would be a latter-day repository for the cultural excesses of an era in love with classical legend, hermits and opium-infused poetry. Weirdly shaped wood, glittering minerals, bones and sea-shells were used to cover the walls and ceilings, while lines

from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) contribute to an unearthly atmosphere at the entrance of the grotto: ‘We were the first that ever burst/ Into that silent sea.’

The grotto team included Julian and Isabel Bannerman, who would soon find themselves building temples and shrines for Prince Charles at his Gloucestershire home, Highgrove. With the Bannermans’ knowledge and enthusiasm (they were particularly inspired by Thomas Wright of Derby’s book *Arbours and Grottos*, 1755), the entrance and exit of the maze at Leeds Castle were incorporated into Verity’s fantastical underworld, although they hadn’t been part of the brief. After everyone else left, the Bannermans stayed on to build a wooden hermitage beneath the entrance, covered in pieces of anthracite and foragings from Knole Park, about 35 kilometres (22 miles) away. This in turn made the exit look dull; their treatment for that involved the old trunks of long-dead elms, bumpy with warts and burrs.

Glastonbury

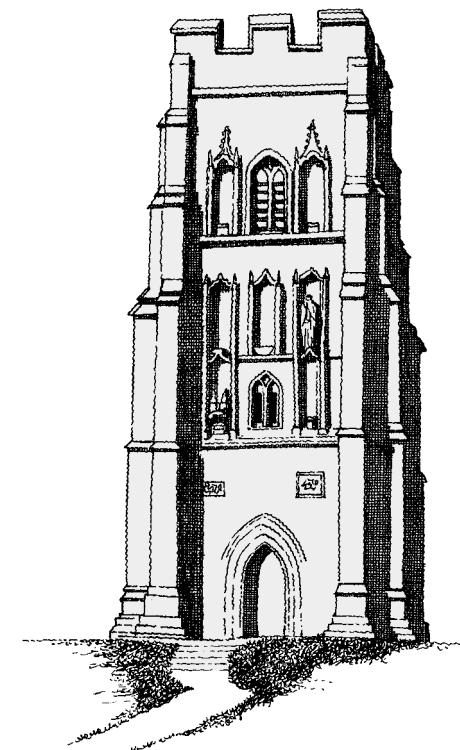
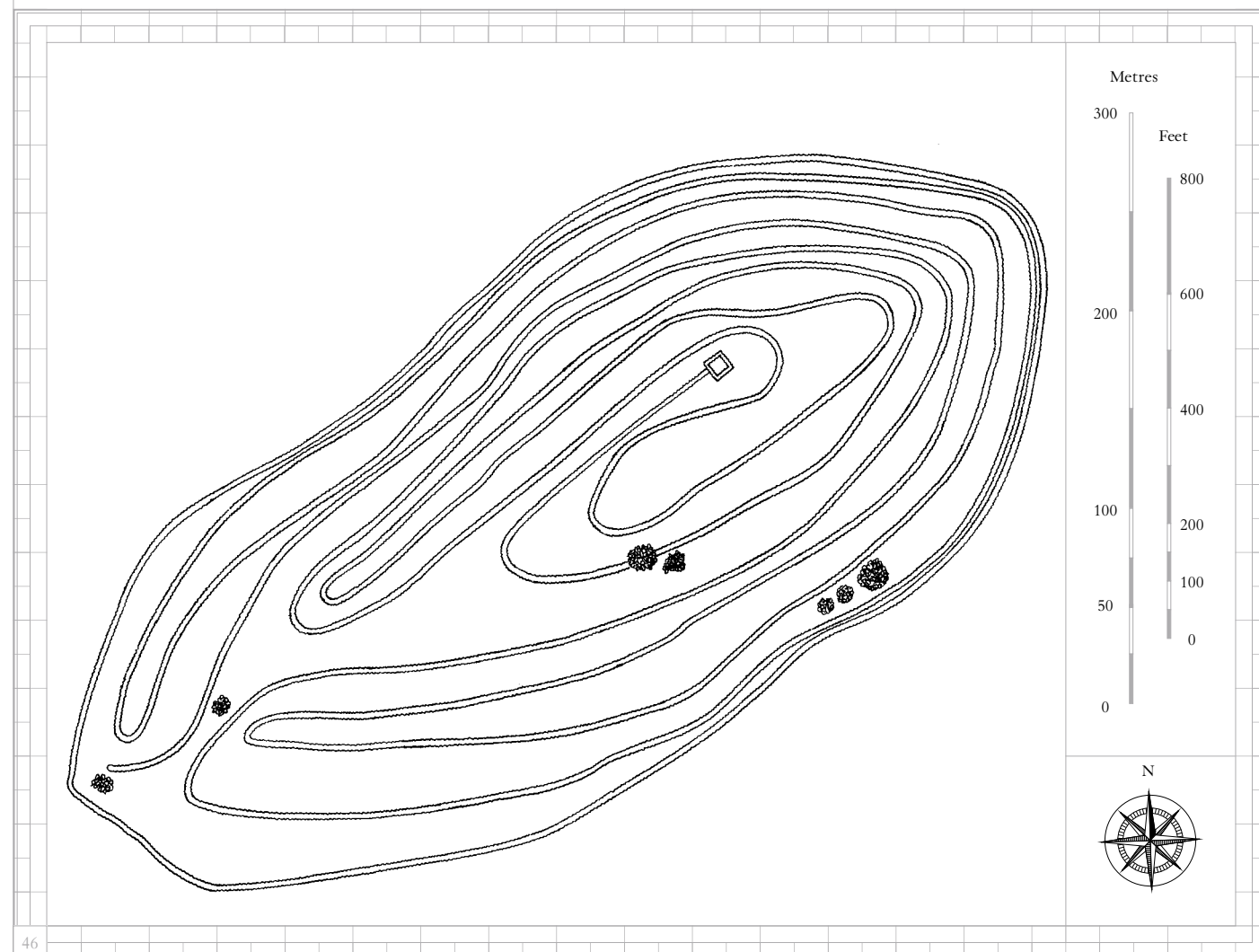
Glastonbury Tor, Glastonbury, Somerset, UK
Earth and turf | c. 3000–2000 BC



There are many things about Glastonbury Tor that make it mystical and magical, besides its location. Rising out of the Somerset Levels in southwestern England, the tor (hill) must have looked even more monumental in days gone by, when it was surrounded by water. When the county of Somerset was considered to be habitable only in summer (its name is derived from ‘summer settlement’), Glastonbury was known as the Glass Isle. It consisted of seven islets floating in water. Flooding is still a fact of life there: between the tor and the Bristol Channel, all is flat.

It is little surprise that the celebrated tor is considered by believers to be a three-dimensional labyrinth.

After all, the ley lines of St Michael and St Mary converge on its summit. The labyrinth remains unacknowledged by archaeologists and its current caretakers, the National Trust: the man-made terraces are given more worldly explanations, such as farming. Other alternative ideas about the power of the tor include its being inhabited by fairies, who live in a network of underground chambers; the fact that, as a former tidal island, it was an ideal passing-through point on the journey from this world to the next; that Joseph of Arimathea, who made Jesus’ tomb, arrived there in AD 37 and set up the very first Christian church; that (a little later) it was the setting of Avalon, where



The tower of St Michael at the top of Glastonbury Tor, standing tall even after the earthquake of 1275.

While Glastonbury Tor is only rumoured to contain a network of *fairies’ tunnels*, an aerial view reveals that the earthwork is a *three-dimensional labyrinth*.

King Arthur’s famous sword was forged; that Arthur and Guinevere were buried in the spot where the abbey was built; and that the labyrinth sometimes glows.

The facts are as follows: when the tor was lit up for the millennium, it did look like a three-dimensional labyrinth. Examined from the air, it is made of seven circuits, like the Cretan labyrinth and like stone carvings all over the world, including those at Tintagel in Cornwall (another Arthurian location). The centre of the labyrinth is not the tower that happens to occupy the top of the tor; that is only a leftover from St Michael’s church, which crumbled in an earthquake in 1275. The maze is much older than that, and may have been built by Neolithic people, at about the same time as nearby Stonehenge. Like Minoan Crete, Avalon was a goddess-led culture, with a benevolent mother as its central figure.

Herrenhausen

Grosse Garten, Royal Gardens of Herrenhausen, Hanover, Germany

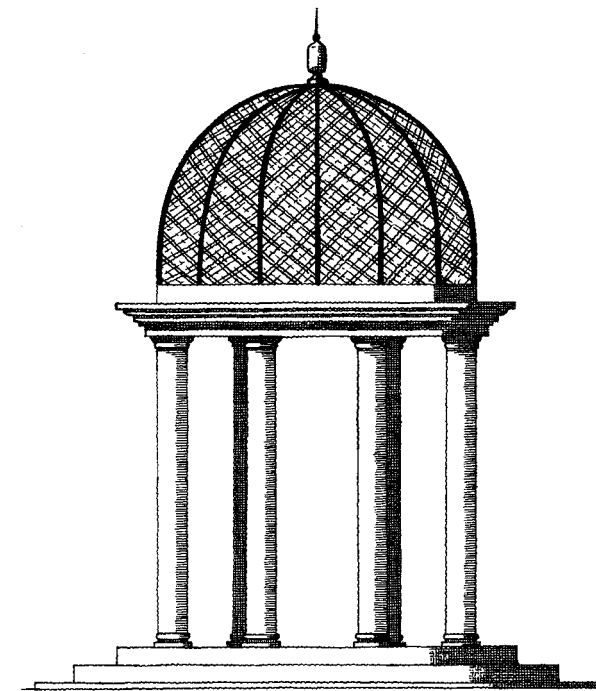
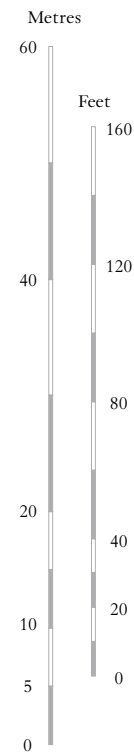
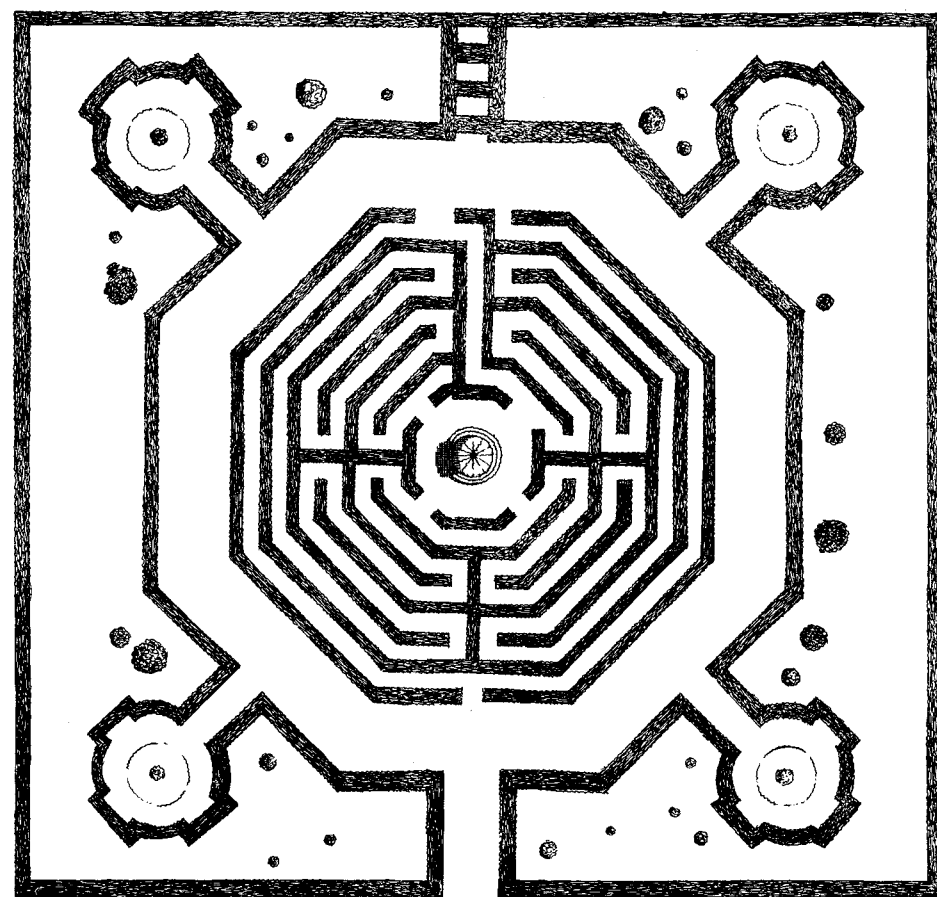
Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) | 1936



Electress Sophie Charlotte was not only matriarch of the House of Hanover in the seventeenth century, but also a great German gardener, whose influences were distinctly Dutch. On marrying the Elector of Saxony, she chose the summer palace of Herrenhausen as the location for her masterpiece. Having grown up in the Netherlands and travelled in Italy and France, she needed someone of broad experience to carry out her accumulated ideas, and she sent the head gardener, Martin Charbonnier, to be trained in Holland. Together they created one of the great

Baroque gardens of Europe, known as the Grosse Garten (large garden).

The Baroque garden style is best viewed from above. It is typified by grandstand symmetry, with axes radiating from a central point, defining garden compartments. Throwing a grid over the natural world has always appealed to the powerful, and it was not all drawn with rulers. In a parterre setting, mazes, along with jets of water and classical statues, provided character. The maze at Herrenhausen – planted in 1936 – was designed in 1674 in the manner



Built in 1674, the octagonal maze with its octagonal pavilion survived World War II, along with the rest of the garden, although the palace was destroyed.

The *royal bloodline* between Germany and Britain was unassailable, even in *World War II*, when the British royal family instructed its Air Force to spare Herrenhausen from aerial bombing.

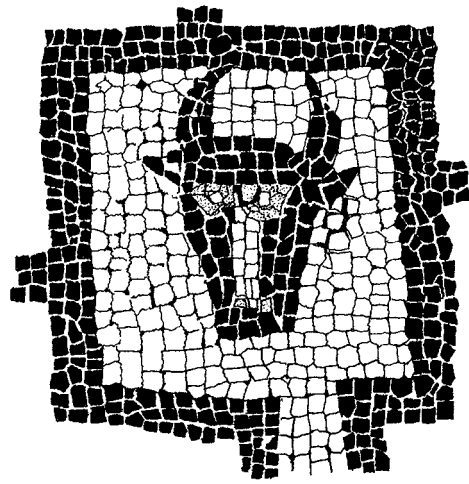
of a church labyrinth, although its shape is octagonal; it is an aesthetic rather than an ecclesiastical choice.

Electress Sophie, granddaughter of the British monarch James I, was also the mother of George I. The union of the kingdom of Great Britain with the House of Hanover was to last through the Georgian period until the accession of Victoria. Off duty from reigning over the British Isles, George I holidayed at Herrenhausen, a great cultural and political hub. The Anglo-German connection remained alive and well, even during World War II. The British royal family instructed the Air Force to leave Herrenhausen alone, only to see it annihilated by the Allies in 1943, along with most of the city of Hanover. The gardens were undamaged, however, and the house itself has been resurrected as a conference centre and meeting place, playing host to Barack Obama and Angela Merkel in 2016, soon after its completion.

Conímbriga

Ruínas de Conímbriga, Condeixa-a-Nova, Portugal

Cut stone tesserae | AD I–I00



In classical legend, bulls sent by the gods were the cause of outrageous behaviour between humans.

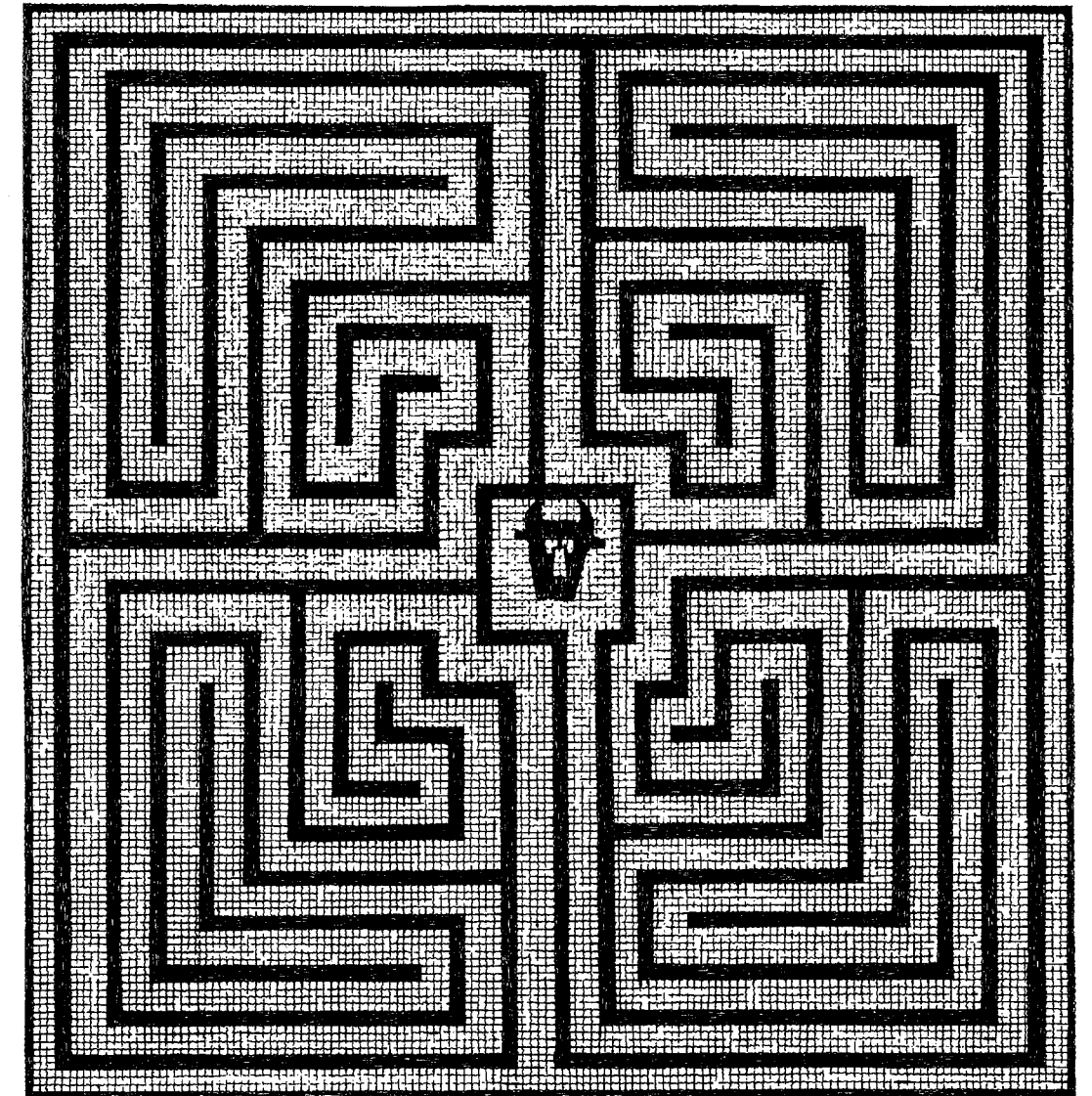
For Roman mosaic artists, the image of the Minotaur in the labyrinth was important: not only was it one of the most powerful images in classical legend, but it also offered many opportunities in terms of craft. A modular maze had the potential for endless varieties of pattern. The circuitous Greek key design, for example, works both as an element of a mosaic maze and as a micro-maze in itself. The same can be said for that other ancient symbol, the swastika. At the partly excavated town of Conímbriga in northern Portugal, where there are remarkably vibrant floors, the House of Swastikas displays some well-preserved designs, impervious to the cultural slants of later civilizations.

The ancient Greek story of the Minotaur is a recurring theme on Conímbriga's floors. He stares out of one mosaic in wonder, a precursor of Picasso's etchings of bull-men some 2,000 years later. In the design shown here, a rather fetching bull is the star at the centre of the labyrinth – could he be the irresistible bull that started all the trouble in the first place?

The trouble, in brief: Poseidon, god of the seas, sent a bull over the waves to King Minos, to use as a sacrifice. It was such a splendid specimen that Minos tried to trick the god by keeping it for himself. Poseidon's revenge led to Minos' queen giving birth to a monster child, the result of a farcical tryst with the splendid bull. Minos locked the creature in a maze devised by his wonder-engineer, Daedalus. Another son – this one 100 per cent human – was killed in Greece (by a different bull, sent by Zeus, king of the gods). The king of Athens was coerced into making amends by dispatching seven young men and women at regular intervals to feed the Minotaur. On one occasion this party included the king's son Theseus, who killed the creature with the practical help of Ariadne.

Despite his errors of judgement on the way home to Athens, Theseus became one of the most celebrated classical heroes. The iconography of man triumphing over monster had an obvious appeal for the empire-builders of Rome, and these Conímbriga 'portraits' are not typical. It could be that the Iberian cult of the bull was already forming when these mosaics were made.

The mosaic 'monster' in this ancient tile maze is depicted with some sympathy – perhaps a sign that the *cult of the bull* was already gaining strength.



Castlewellan

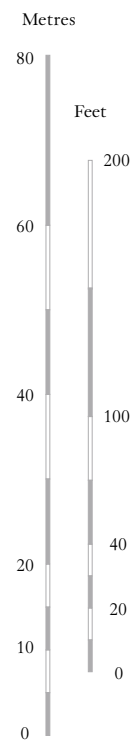
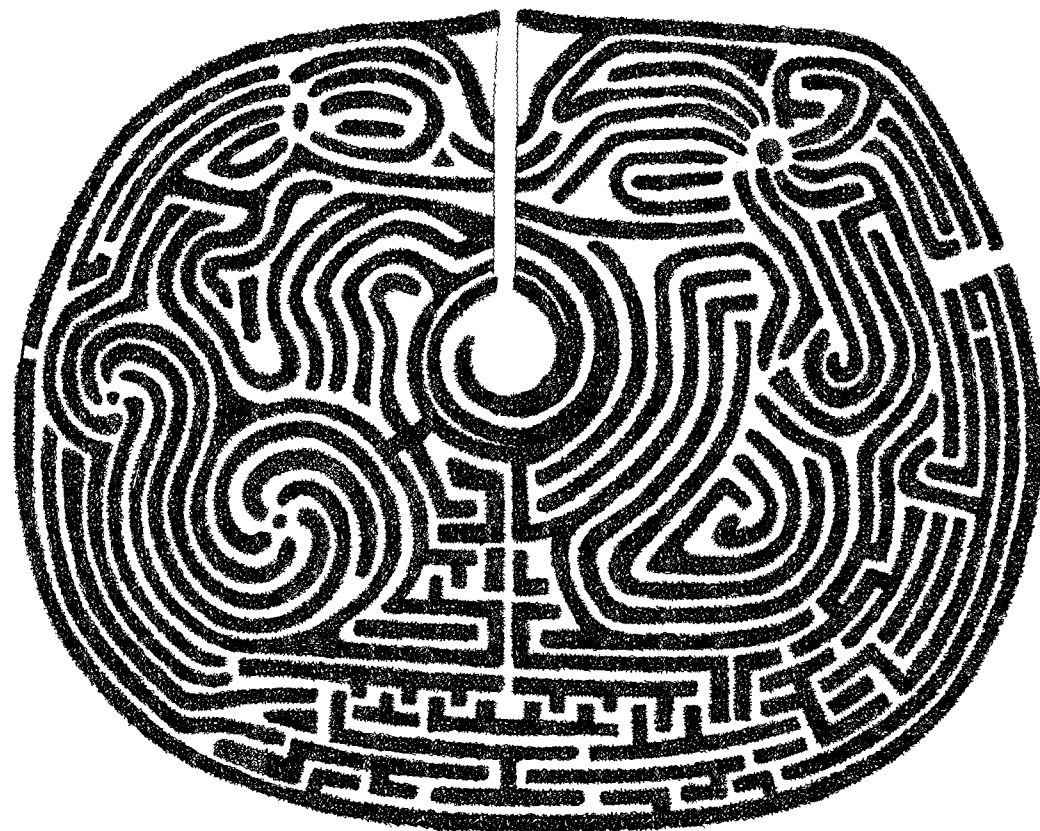
Castlewellan Peace Maze, Castlewellan Forest Park, County Down, Northern Ireland

Yew (*Taxus baccata*) | 1998–2000



As a tourist destination, Northern Ireland is not perhaps up there with the Republic of Ireland, yet it is part of the same island, with mountains, beaches and forests in its own right. In County Down, just over the border from the Republic, the Irish landscape is wonderful, with the tree-clad Mountains of Mourne rising out of the Irish Sea. This magical topography fed the imagination of Belfast native C.S. Lewis: the mountain range provided the backdrop for his *Chronicles of Narnia*. Even after permanently swapping Northern Ireland for Oxford, he was preoccupied by the scenery he had left behind. ‘I yearn

to see County Down in the snow’, he reminisced. ‘One almost expects to see a march of dwarfs dashing past.’ But just as there was no march of dwarfs in Oxford, the real people Lewis had left behind lacked magic. Inventing a different world against a familiar backdrop was a way of sidestepping Ulster politics, and he made no secret of his fantasy to deport adherents of sectarian politics and replace them with ‘a populace of my own choosing’. Five years after his death in 1963, the Troubles began in earnest, and for a time the beauty of the mountains was best remembered in works of fiction.

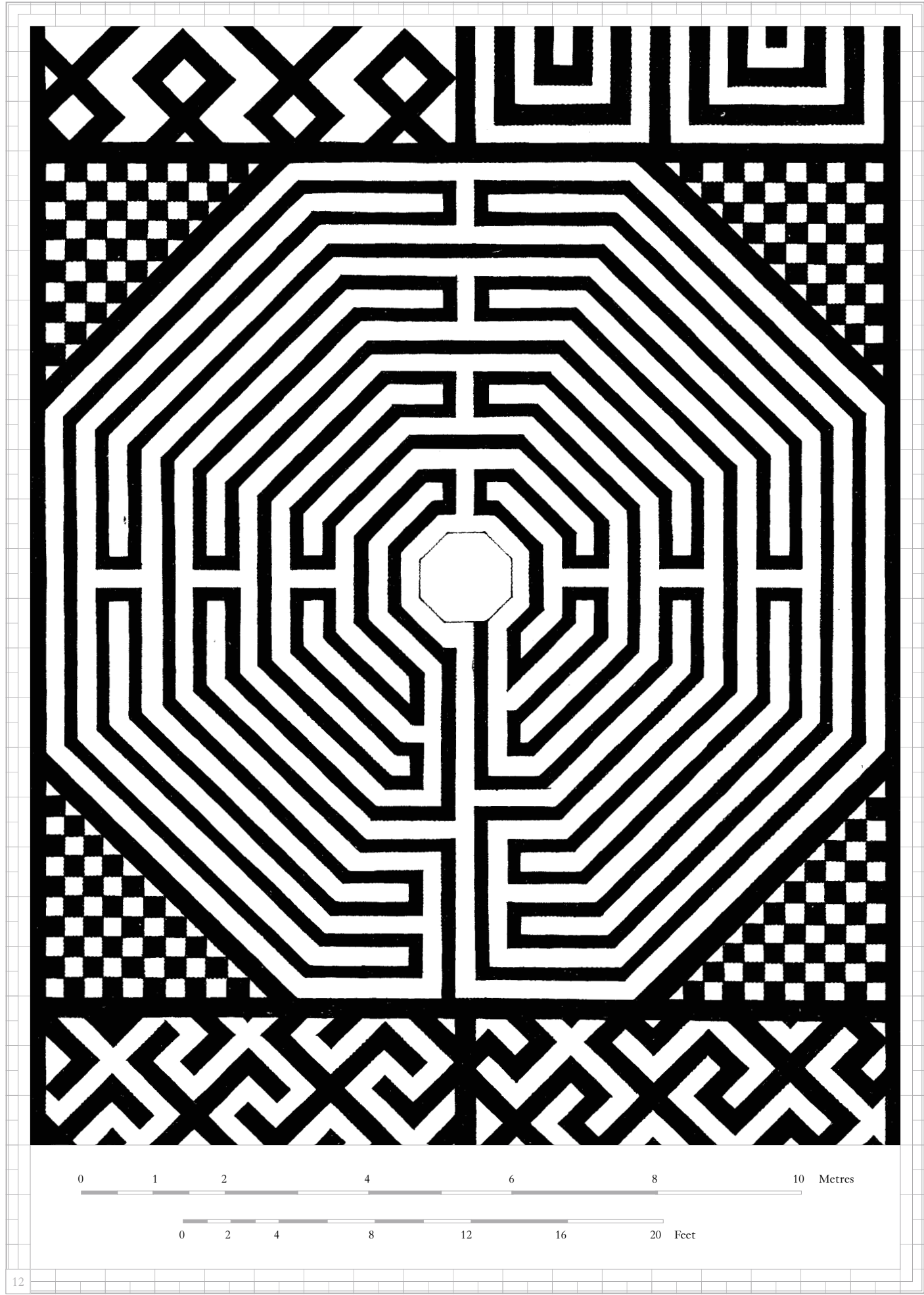


In this commemoration of the Good Friday Agreement, *the walls are low, the paths wide* and lines of communication open.



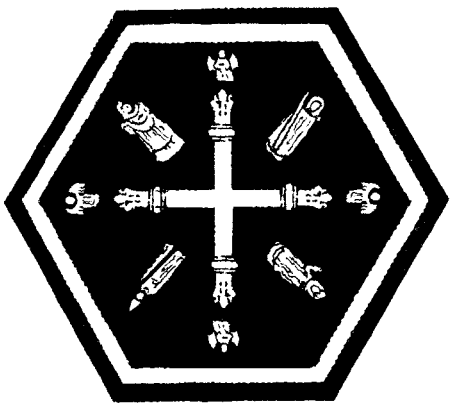
Castlewellan Castle on the edge of the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland, built in the 1850s in Scottish baronial style.

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was commemorated with a hedge maze at Castlewellan, a forest park at the foot of the mountains. The twists and turns of any maze provide easy symbolism, although the message of the Peace Maze was driven home by design elements such as the central divide and the bell in the middle. The divide must be crossed before the maze can be completed, and there is a certain satisfaction in ringing the peace bell at the end. The walls are low, and the paths wide: lines of communication are open. ‘Good luck and have fun’, advises the sign at the entrance. ‘Remember, every journey starts with the first step.’



Amiens

Cathédrale de Notre-Dame d'Amiens, Amiens, France
Black and white marble tiles | 1288



The architects and the bishop of Amiens were immortalized in 1288, in the central stone of the labyrinth.

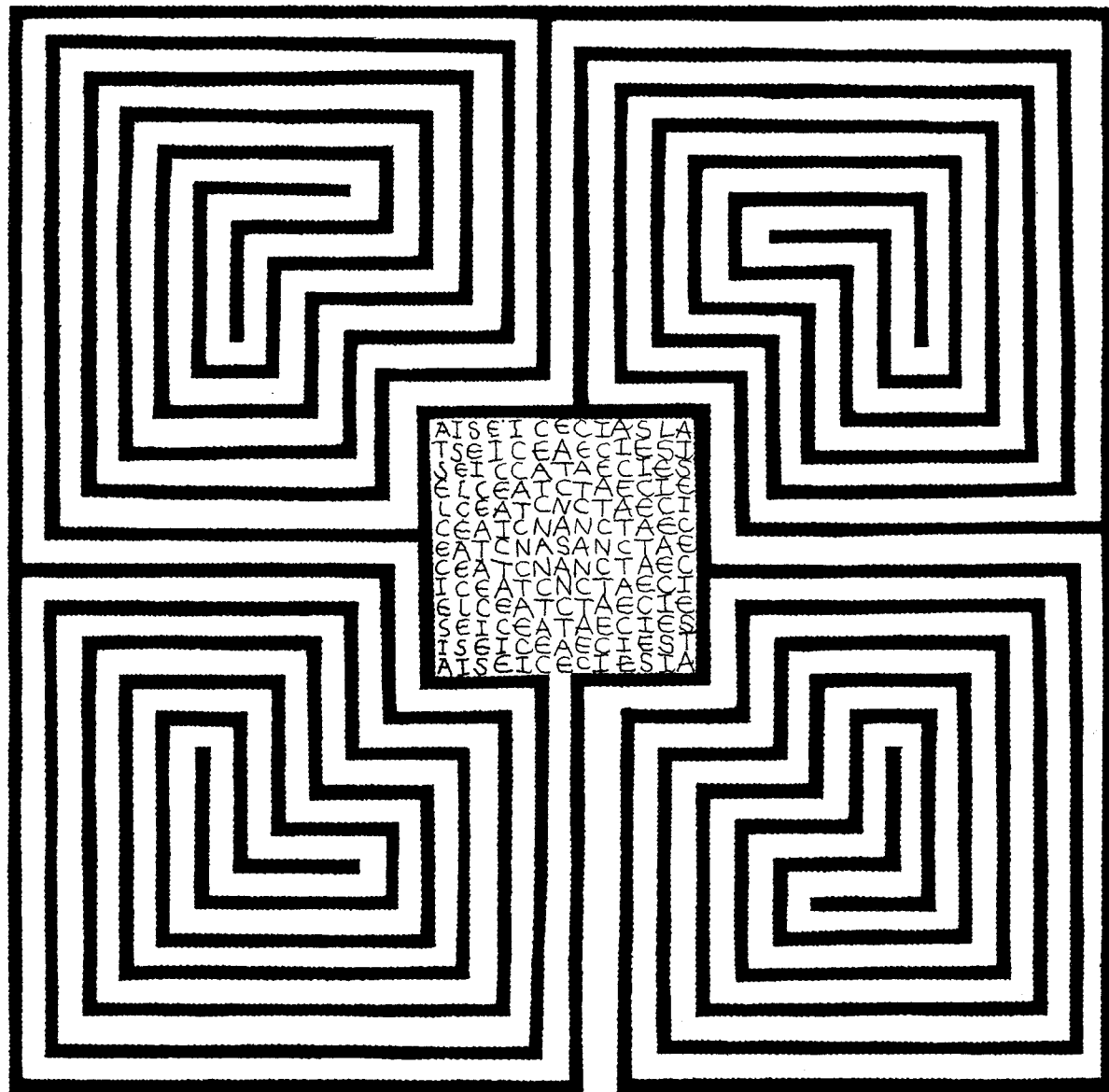
Built over a relatively short period, 50 years, the cathedral at Amiens is regarded as a peerless, uninterrupted example of high Gothic style. Its construction was funded by the attraction of the ‘head of John the Baptist’, or rather his skull (now lost), which was brought to Amiens from Constantinople by Crusaders. In 1288, when the flooring of the new cathedral was complete, the architects responsible (as well as the bishop) were immortalized at the heart of a black-and-white labyrinth, amid a showcase of dazzling, decorative geometric flooring, which covered the whole nave. Their immortality was disrupted briefly when the labyrinth was destroyed in 1827 (the one we see today is a replica, built with new materials in 1894–7). Also known as the Maison Dédalus, the Amiens labyrinth, and others like it, strengthened the narrative thread back to Greek myth, acknowledging that earlier classical archi-

tect, Daedalus, builder of the impossible labyrinth on Crete.

By the time of the French Revolution, many ecclesiastical floors had already been destroyed, with further destruction during and after. Labyrinths had pagan associations, not only with classical mythology. In his scholarly work *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings Over 5000 Years*, the late Hermann Kern put forward the idea that several cathedrals in northern France (Amiens, Sens and Auxerre among them) utilized their labyrinths for a ritual dance at Easter. The surprising participants were priests, who played ball, and a dean, who sang. With the ball symbolizing the sun and/or Jesus, the dance across the labyrinth was based on the movement of the planets.

Aesthetically, the cathedral at Amiens, with its graphically striking floor patterns radiating out from the labyrinth in the centre of the nave, is anything but austere, and Kern’s argument is a persuasive one. This undermines centuries of received wisdom on the self-flagellating nature of church labyrinths. He says that the idea that pilgrims shuffled around them on their knees, as the last punishment in perhaps a punishing journey to the cathedral itself, was made up in the eighteenth century. In this case, even contemporary revisionist thought failed to save many of the decorative floors.

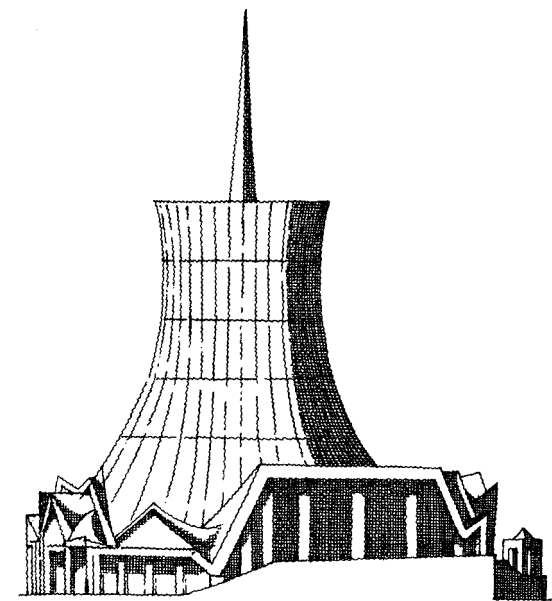
Ariadne's thread in this Roman mosaic leads to a letter labyrinth with the distinctly Christian message *Sancta Ecclesia* (the Holy Church).



Algiers

Cathédrale du Sacré-Coeur, Algiers, Algeria

Mosaic | AD 324



The world's oldest known church labyrinth is housed inside the ultra-modernist Cathédrale du Sacré-Coeur in Algiers.

At what point was the pagan labyrinth, with its links to gods and monsters, adapted by Christians? It could have been in about AD 324, when the basilica of Reparta was founded in north Africa. The floor mosaic here, Roman in style yet Christian in substance, was a practical hybrid and is the first known church labyrinth. The medium was as important as the message, and a familiar medium was more effective in housing the unfamiliar. So, here we have four quadrants and even the thread of Ariadne, but it does not lead to the old scenario of man over monster; rather, it leads to the new heart of the matter: *Sancta Ecclesia* (the Holy Church).

To modern eyes, the centre looks like a crossword. It is clearly a palindrome, in which the two words can be read forwards, backwards, up or down. 'S' for *Sancta* forms the cruciform in the exact centre. The placing of the labyrinth was unambiguous, with its entrance facing the basilica door, so that churchgoers' eyes were directed towards the centre of the labyrinth. In the medieval labyrinth style, the entrance of the maze corresponded with the direction of the altar.

The mosaic labyrinth of Algiers is preserved within the startling modernist architecture of the Cathédrale du Sacré-Coeur, built in the 1950s. After being unearthed in 1843, the original site of the maze had been steadily depleted, through theft and earthquakes. It was found in the west end of the basilica of Reparta, in the Roman town of Castellum Tingitanum (later Orléansville, then Al-Asnam, now Chlef), 195 kilometres (120 miles) from the Algerian capital. The date of the founding of the basilica was a significant one in the history of Christianity. In that year, the joint Roman emperors of the west and east, Constantine and Licinius, signed the Edict of Milan, ensuring freedom of worship for all, regardless of deity.