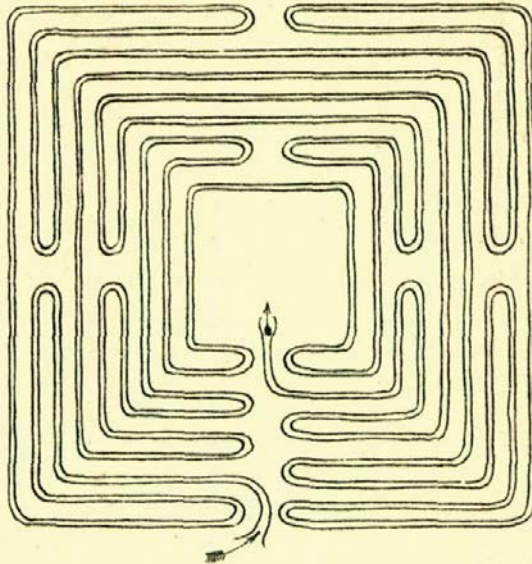


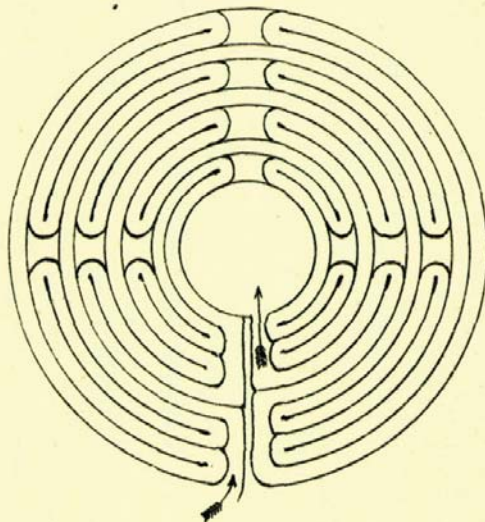
PLAN OF MIZ-MAZE ON S. CATHERINE'S HILL, WINCHESTER.

Fig. 1.



PLAN OF MIZ-MAZE ON BREMORE DOWN.

Fig. 2.



Scale 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 feet.

Measured & drawn by
N. C. H. Nisbett. R.I.B.A.

ANCIENT HAMPSHIRE MAZES.

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Mazes are among the rarest of English antiquities. There are very few now remaining in England, and it is interesting to know that two of them are in Hampshire.

They were not peculiar to this country, but existed also in France and Germany. There was one still surviving at Caen in 1767, and there is a German engraving of a maze, preserved in the British Museum.

The Mazes in Hampshire are on St. Catharine's Down, Winchester, and on Breamore Down, the former being square and the latter circular.

They appear to have been common in the middle ages, and to have existed on many village greens. These mazes were an intricate pattern of narrow paths with many turns and windings, constructed on geometrical principles, and leading, if followed rightly, from the circumference to the centre, or from the outside of the square to its middle part.

To tread the maze and find their way by the correct path from the outside to the middle or central part, was a diversion of our forefathers, and there are references to this amusement in English literature.

Mazes were also called by the names Shepherd's races, Troy towns, and Julian bowers.

Dr. Stukeley, who wrote on them in the middle of the eighteenth century, when more existed, supposed that the maze at Alkborough in Yorkshire, and another near St. Anne's Well, about a mile from Nottingham, were of Roman origin. However this may be, it is certain that mazes marked out on the turf of hills and village greens, were used for recreation in the middle ages.

Stukeley's account of the usual locality of mazes is as follows:—"They are generally upon open green places by the side of roads or rivers, upon meadows and the like near a town. The name often remains, though the place be altered and cultivated, and lovers of antiquity, especially of the inferior class, always speak of 'em with great pleasure, as if there was something extraordinary in the thing, though they cannot tell what. Very often they are called Troy-town. What generally appears at present, is no more than a circular work made of banks of earth in the fashion of a maze or labyrinth, and the boys to this day divert themselves in running in it, one after another, which leads them by many windings quite through and back again."¹

Mazes were in existence a few years ago on Leigh Common, Sherborne Dorset, on the Village Green at Comberton, Cambridgeshire, at Alkborough, and at Holderness, and some or all of these may still be preserved. There was a maze on Tothill Fields, Westminster. Tothill was a manor in Westminster, and in the reign of Henry III., was held by the King's favourite clerk, John Mansel, who was the first Chancellor of the Exchequer, and was also lord of the Manor of Broughton in Hampshire, as mentioned at the meeting of the Hampshire Field Club at Broughton in June, 1896. It was at Tothill that Mansel entertained the King and his court. The Maze may have been in existence at that time. Aubrey, the antiquary, who wrote in the seventeenth century, says, "There is a maze at this day in Tuthill Fields, Westminster, and much frequented in the summer time in fair afternoons." The Churchwardens' accounts of St. Margaret's Westminster, show that this maze was made anew in 1672. It is represented in Hollars' View of Tothill Fields.

¹Quoted in "Notes and Queries," Ser. III., Vol. X., p. 399.

The Abbot of Battle had a maze in the garden attached to his inn or town house, in Mill Lane, Tooley Street, Southwark. Aubrey says¹ "At Southwark there was a maze, now converted into buildings bearing that name." "Maze Lane," and "Maze Pond," Tooley Street, Southwark, were so called from the Maze there, the Estate being known as the Manor of the Maze.² Early in the reign of Henry VI., it belonged to the Burcester (or Bouchier) family, and afterwards to the Clintons and Copleys passing eventually into the hands of Mr. John Webbe Watson, who about 1790, let the site of the Manor House on building leases, and hence the name John Street, Webbe Street, and Watson Street.

The Maze on Breamore Down is locally spoken of as the Miz-maze, a varied re-duplication of the word maze. Such an expression as "I was all in a miz-maze"—meaning, in confusion—is still in local use. The name itself has come from the old English "masen," to puzzle. Locke in his "Conduct of the Understanding" alludes to the clue which leads people through the miz-maze of variety of opinions, and authors to truth.

Shakespeare says:—"The quaint mazes in the wanton green, for lack of tread are undistinguishable."—*Midsummer Night Dream*.—Act II., Scene II.; and also "Here's a maze trod, indeed through forth rights and meanders!"—*The Tempest*.—Act III., Scene III.

Mazes on village greens if not carefully renewed from time to time would certainly in the course of centuries become obliterated, especially in populous parishes. Those which have been preserved in Hampshire are situated on chalk hills, and may have owed their preservation to their greater distance from inhabited sites.

In reference to the plans of the Hampshire Mazes, which accompany this paper, the first point to notice is the different systems on which they are cut in the turf.

On Breamore Down, the lines which are cut are not the paths, but the path to be followed is found by walking between the lines and without crossing them. On St. Catherine's Hill,

¹ Aubrey's *Anecdotes and Traditions*, p. 105.

² *London, Past and Present*, by Wheatley and Cunningham.

instead of the lines which separate the paths being cut, a narrow and shallow trench is dug, which forms the path itself. If a piece of tracing paper be laid over the St. Catherine's Hill plan, and the paths separated by single lines, the two plans can be more easily compared, and it will at once be seen that the general principle on which they are constructed is very similar.

The plans are drawn to the same scale to assist in comparison.

