

# MAZES & LABYRINTHS

Short introduction to history, types  
and uses of mazes

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# DEFINITIONS

ACCORDING TO THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY

## MAZE

- A Maze is a complex network of paths; a Labyrinth.

## LABYRINTH

- A Labyrinth is a complicated structure with many passages, hard to find a way through or about without guidance; a maze.



People argue the definitions either way. The most strict interpretation from the dictionary would indicate that one on the left is a maze and the one on the right is a labyrinth, for you need guidance to find your way through the one on the right, but could just follow your nose to venture through the one on the left. The convention that has established in more recent years IS THE OTHER WAY ROUND, i.e. a labyrinth is a path which twists and turns, but which has no dead ends, whilst a maze is designed to confuse. A person can get lost in a maze.



I use either word synonymously

# HISTORY & TYPE

Mazes have been drawn for at least 4,000 years. They were not fun things originally but seen as essential tools in the art of survival. They held mystery and symbolism that indicated the twists and turns in life, and how danger and changes of fortune were for ever present – just round the corner. Anything that could help control or understand such forces was to be embraced.

As the years went by, so understanding and subsequent use of these potent symbols changed. I see the following categories that emerged.

1. Ancient
2. Greek and Roman - Mediterranean
3. Medieval Christian influence
4. Medieval Secular influence
5. Middle Ages development
6. Modern – Religious [both Christian and New Age], Outdoor Fun [e.g. Maize mazes], Puzzles [mind teasers for coffee breaks etc].

## 1a. Ancient

The earliest examples found in these lands is of the 'troy-town' design. The path was left by digging the turf away as indicated.



One example is the rock etching found at Tintagel, Cornwall, although there is some dispute as to its age. The style of etching is Neolithic, about 1,600 BC, but it has been suggested that it could be as late as the 1900's AD, as an early New Age piece of graffiti!



## 1b. Ancient

Just to be contrary, the Troy-town at Somerton, near Banbury, is still an excellent example of this type of maze, but the path is the dug part! The dimensions are 57 feet by 50 feet, with a path width of 1 foot. The total length is 400 yards.

There are numerous examples of this kind around the world. The usual interpretation is that they would have been associated with ritual walking to invoke courtship, fertility or fecundity, or anticipate death and rebirth.

The names that have survived down the centuries indicate this with such examples as Julian's Bower, Maiden's Bower, Boughton Shepherd's Race and the like.





## 2a. Mediterranean

Surely the most well know legend from the mediterranean times is the Cretan Minator story concerning love, death, mazes and overcoming adversity.

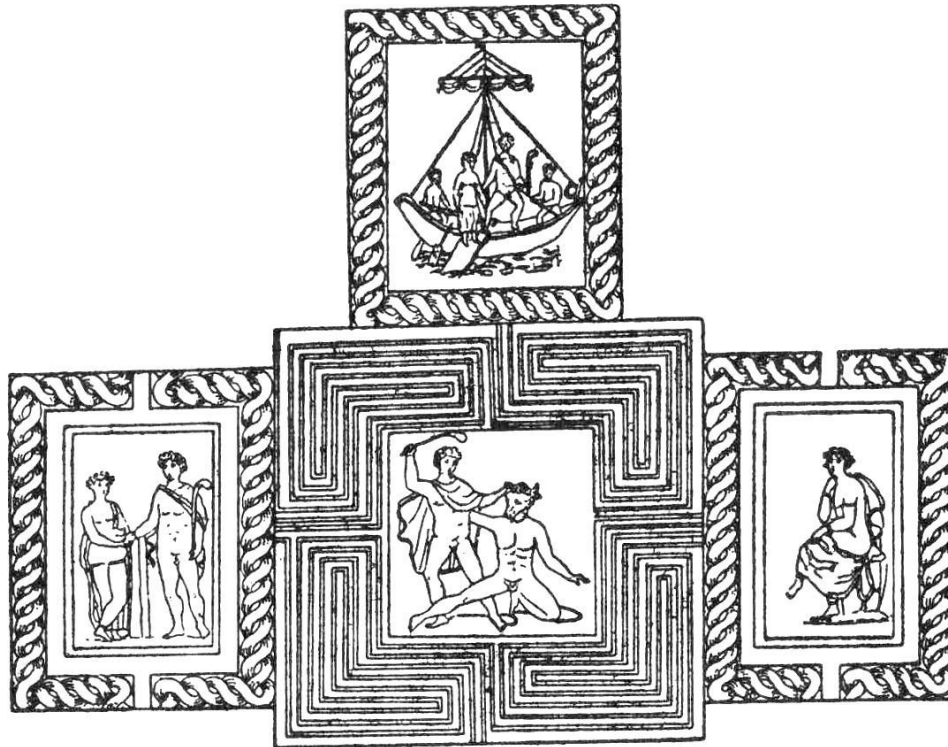
Same religious theme, different setting.



## 2b. Mediterranean

The Romans were not slow to employ the labyrinthine design in their floor mosaics.

First shift away from the religious – an art form.

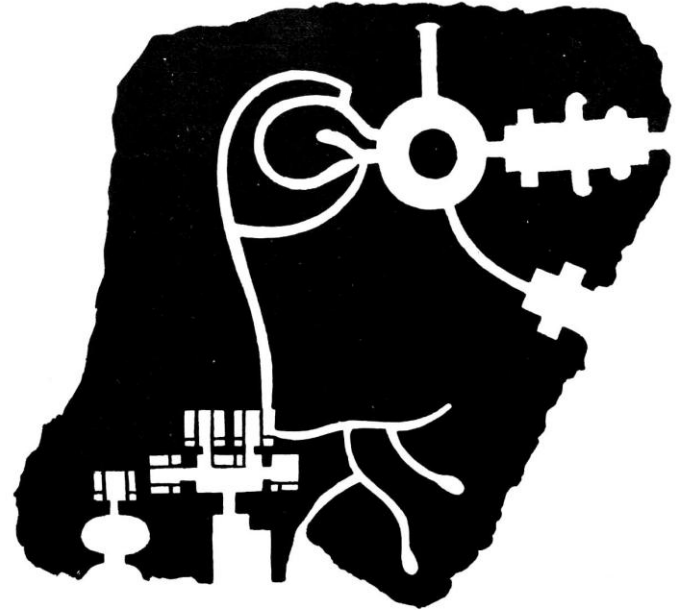




## 2c. Mediterranean

Also emerging is the concept of 'puzzle'

The Etruscans certainly used mazes to protect their tombs. One cemetery at Poggio Cajella is shown opposite, but the one near Volterra was written about thus:-



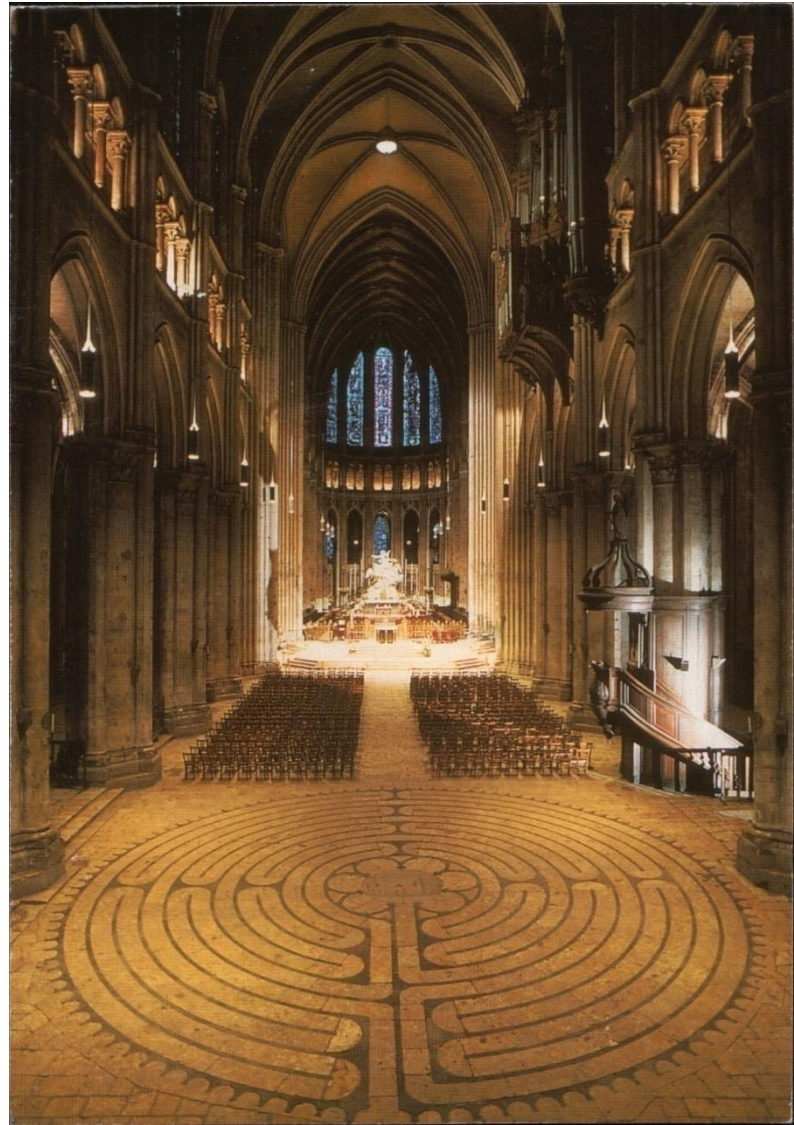
“A long passage cut in the rock, six feet wide but only three high, so that you must travel on all fours. From time to time the passage widens into chambers, yet not high enough to permit you to stand upright, or it meets the passages of similar character opening in various directions and extending into the heart of the hill, how far no one can say. A perfect labyrinth.”

### 3a. Medieval Christian

The Medieval period showed quite an interest and development in maze construction.

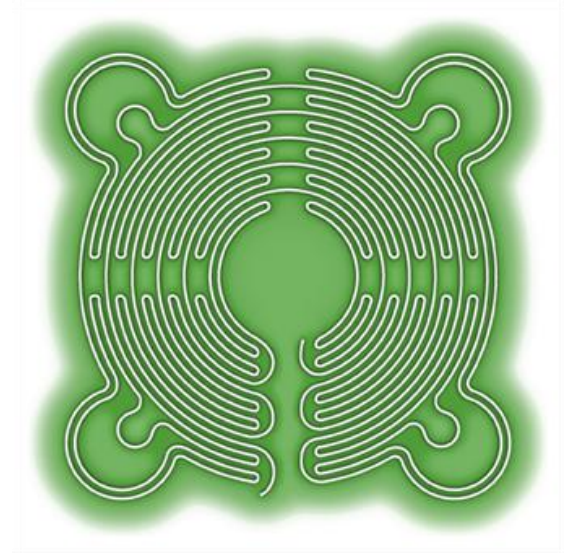
It was thought at the time that the many cathedral floor labyrinths offered a substitute pilgrimage into the spiritual heart or Jerusalem, especially if it was carried out on one's knees! It was certainly cheaper and less dangerous than an actual journey to the Holy Land.

Many cathedrals had mazes, but the most well known one is that of Chartres, giving the nomenclature of that design to all the others.



### 3b. Medieval Christian

One rather disturbing phenomena was that some of the original pagan turf mazes were probably recut, in the desire to 'christianise' them. One very good example of this is the extended turf maze at Saffron Walden, the example at the top. The bottom is Julian's Bower.





## 4a. Medieval Secular

The Church does not hold the monopoly on concepts of Life, Death and Rebirth. Nature has always presented this as a fact of Life. Medieval gardens continued to incorporate the concepts of fecundity and fertility - common in pre-Christian thought – via the developing maze designs. It must have been a recognised necessary aspect – but a covert one.

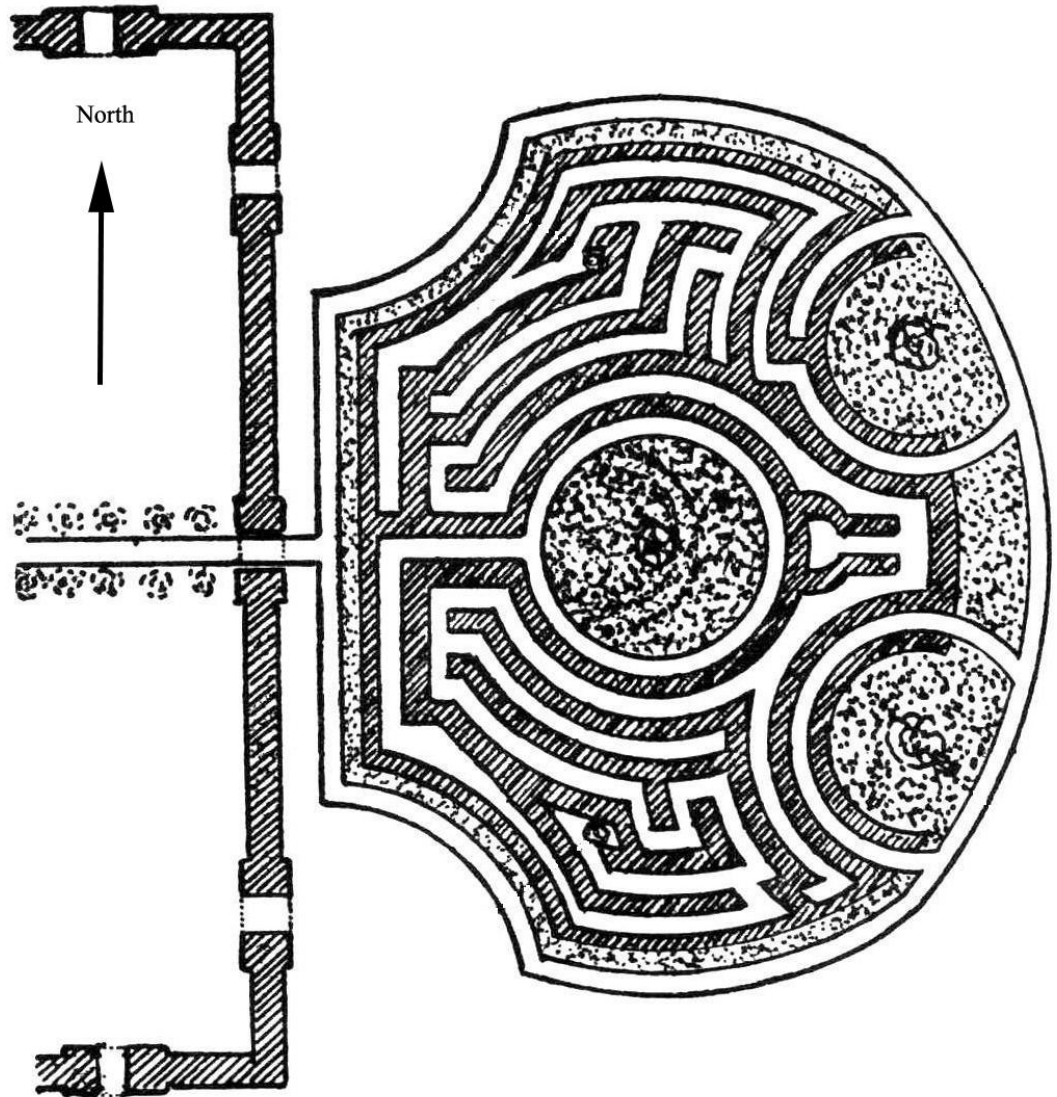
Perhaps some of the more sexually blatant designs were a way of secretly poking fun at the more staid members of the aristocracy. One excellent example of this is the maze at Somerleyton, Suffolk.

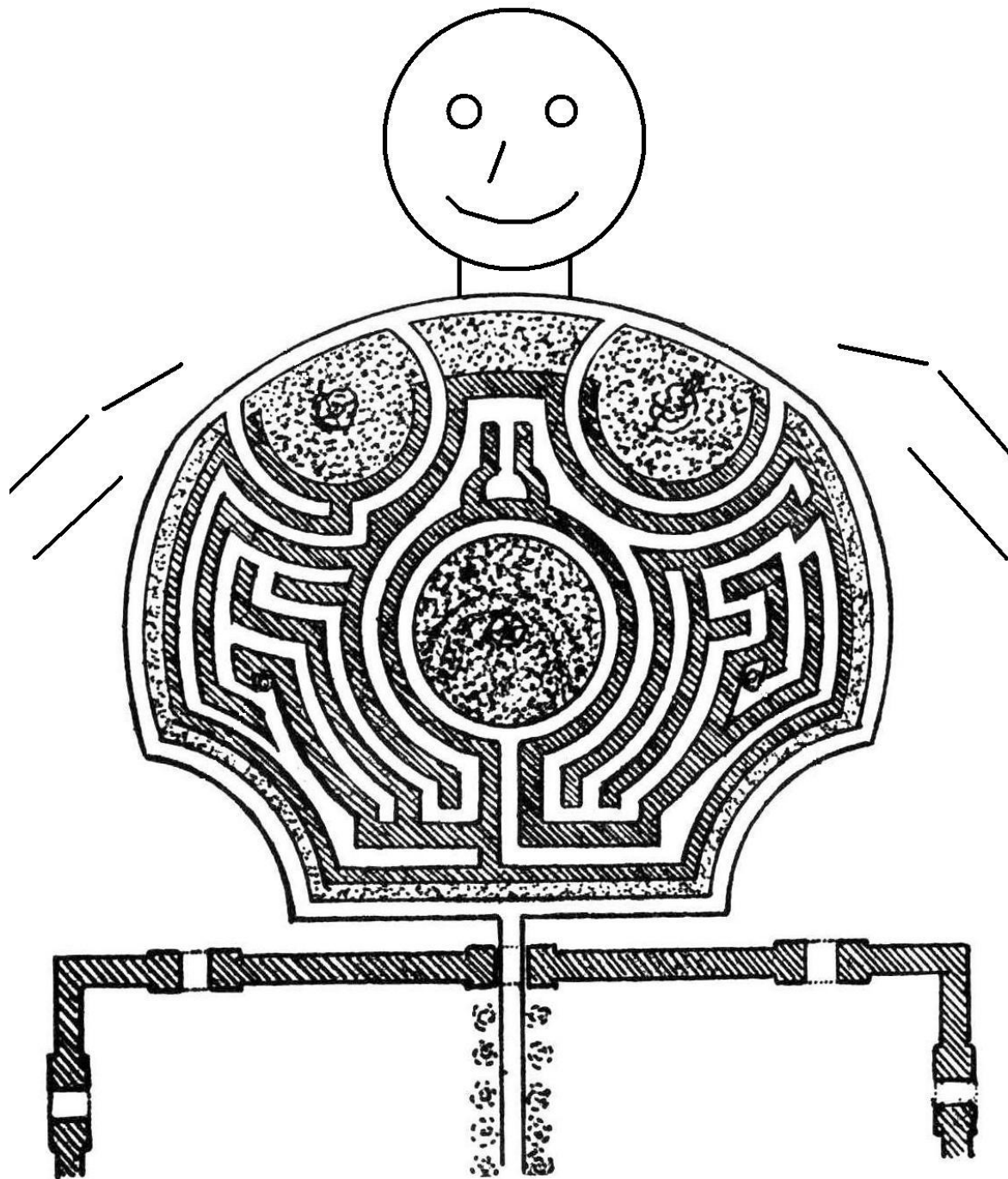
The hedges were initially small, although probably grew with the decades. Henry II built a labyrinth to hide his goings on with his mistress Rosamund from his jealous wife's eyes.



## 4b. Medieval Secular

The plan of Somerleyton maze explains what I mean.





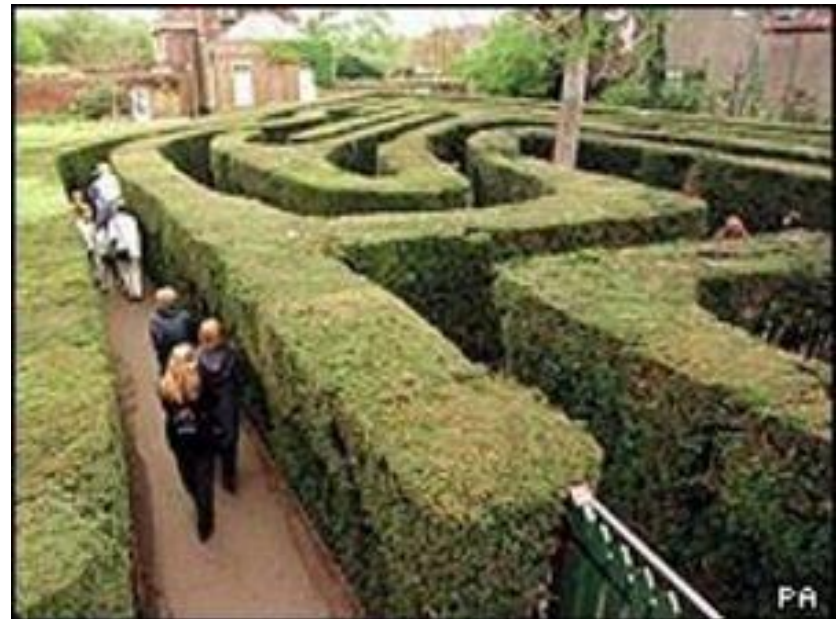


## 5. Middle Ages

By the 16<sup>th</sup> Century hedge mazes were really a must for the great manor houses. Hedges could completely obscure the view, enabling people to socialise with ulterior motives safely hidden, or make play on the [especially] Elizabethan garden ploy of focussing on specific garden features whilst obscuring other parts. The eyes were channelled along particular lines and directions.

The most well known example of this kind of maze is that at Hampton Court.

Both the Christian and Pagan ideas vanished in preference to fun and displayed wealth.



## 6a. Modern Uses

The Turf Maze, along with stone circles, has had a comeback. Neo Pagan or New Age adherents have started building them in all manner of places and using many different materials.



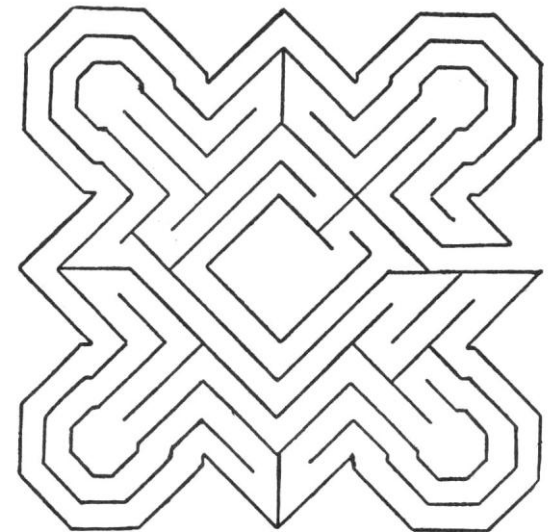
There seems little real understanding of the issues concerning the appropriate sites or materials to use, but rather just a need to express a resurgence of interest in such troy-towns and so restate the belief system that they symbolise in a way that intrigues rather than be adversarial.

The example shown here is to be found on St Agnes in the Scillies.

## 6b. Modern Uses

There has been a similar growth of interest within the Christian influence.

Of the two examples shown, the first is of the Chartres type within Norwich Cathedral cloisters, built within the last decade, whilst the other is a pavement mosaic near the west door of Ely Cathedral, constructed in 1870.

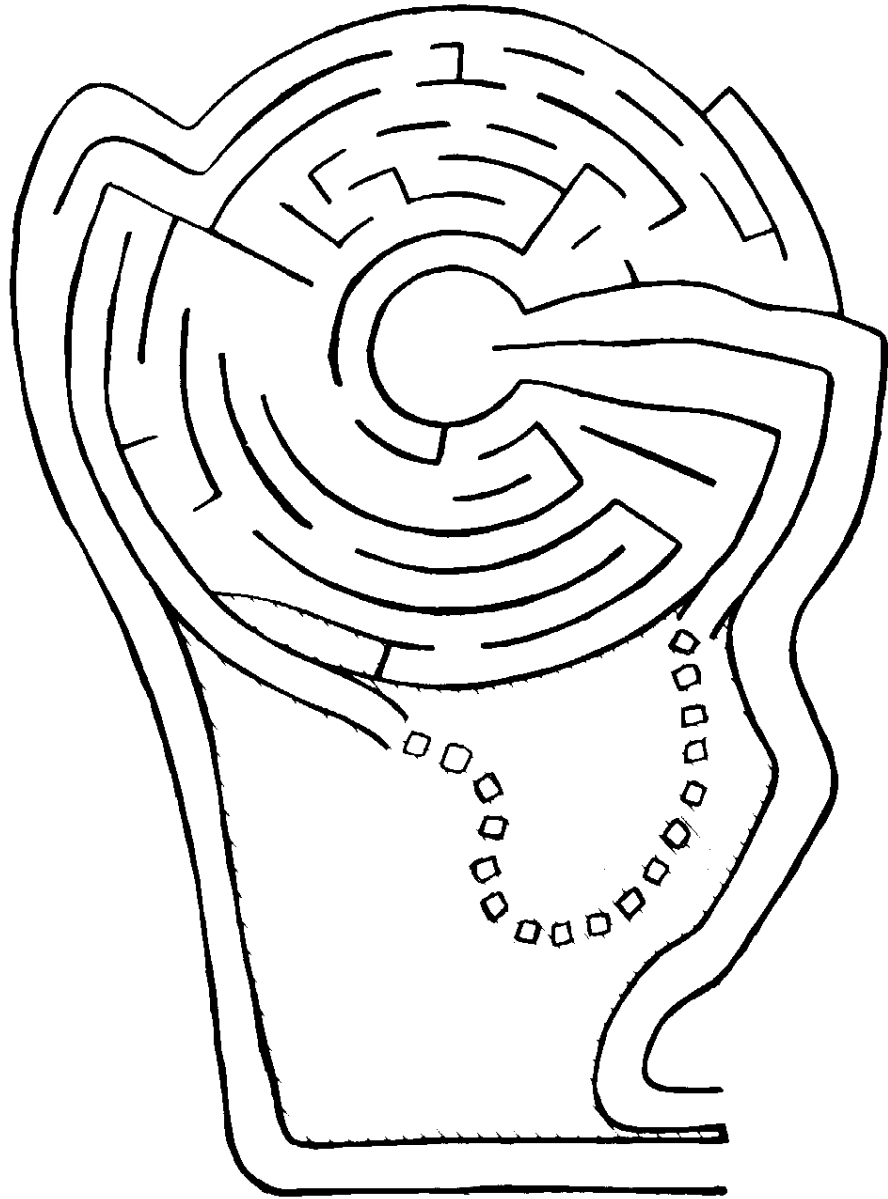


A little more thought went into the maze that was constructed in a vicarage garden at Wyck Rissington in 1947. The incumbent, the Cannon Harry Cheales, had a dream of the design, so proceeded to concrete his ideas in this way by using wooden fencing screens and garden plants.

You could get lost in this maze [as I can testify!] yet the worthy Cannon was trying to portray the 'Stations of the Cross' as well as the path through Life. You notice that one area is an extended garden. This followed a tunnel section and preceded the attainment of the centre, before exiting to the road once more.

This final stretch symbolised the Crucifixion, Purgatory and/or Heavenly rest, and ultimate Atonement with God.

The Maze was destroyed when the vicarage was sold.





## 6c. Modern Uses

Just as aristocrats kept the fashion in those days, so farmers, needing to diversify, have cottoned on to the maize maze as a means of increasing their income without too much crop loss or increased expenditure.

Some of the designs are quite intricate and cover a considerable acreage.



## 6d. Modern Uses

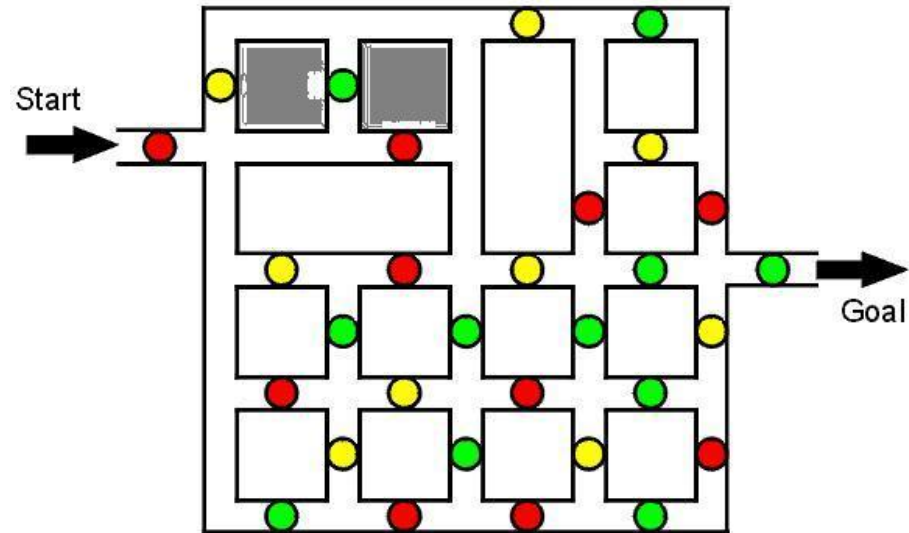
Although scientists use the maze as a means of testing intelligence, the fun element of mazes has certainly been exploited for the coffee break and brain teaser.

See if you can solve the following.

Travel along the paths from **Start** to **Goal** and go through the dots in the order red-green-yellow, red-green-yellow, and so on.

### Hint.

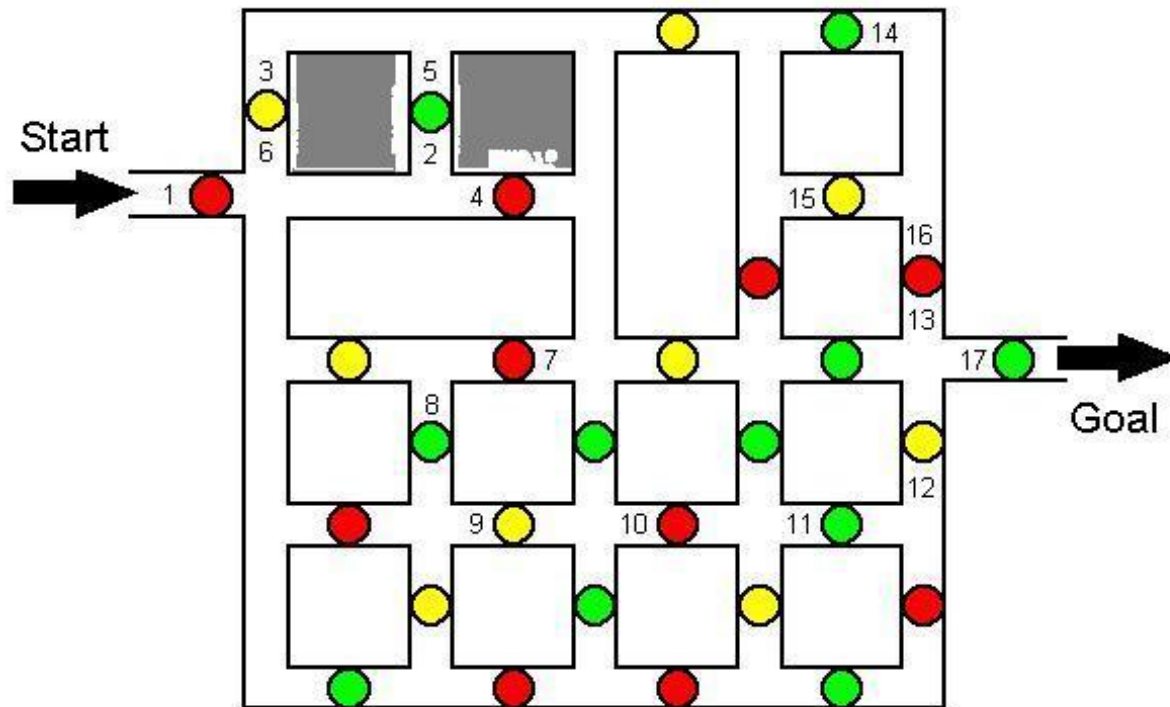
Most of the tricky part of this maze happens at the beginning. Notice the two blocks that are shaded in this diagram. You must begin the maze by repeatedly looping around those two blocks until you can travel through the yellow dot at the upper-left heading north.





## Solution to the Dot Maze:

Go through the dots in the order indicated by these numbers. Notice that you go through some dots more than once--but in different directions.



# SACRED GEOMETRY

## Relevant Mathematics

It is only geometry and numbers that appear in nature, that comprise sacred geometry.

These are DISCOVERED rather than constructed!

They induce RESONANCE.

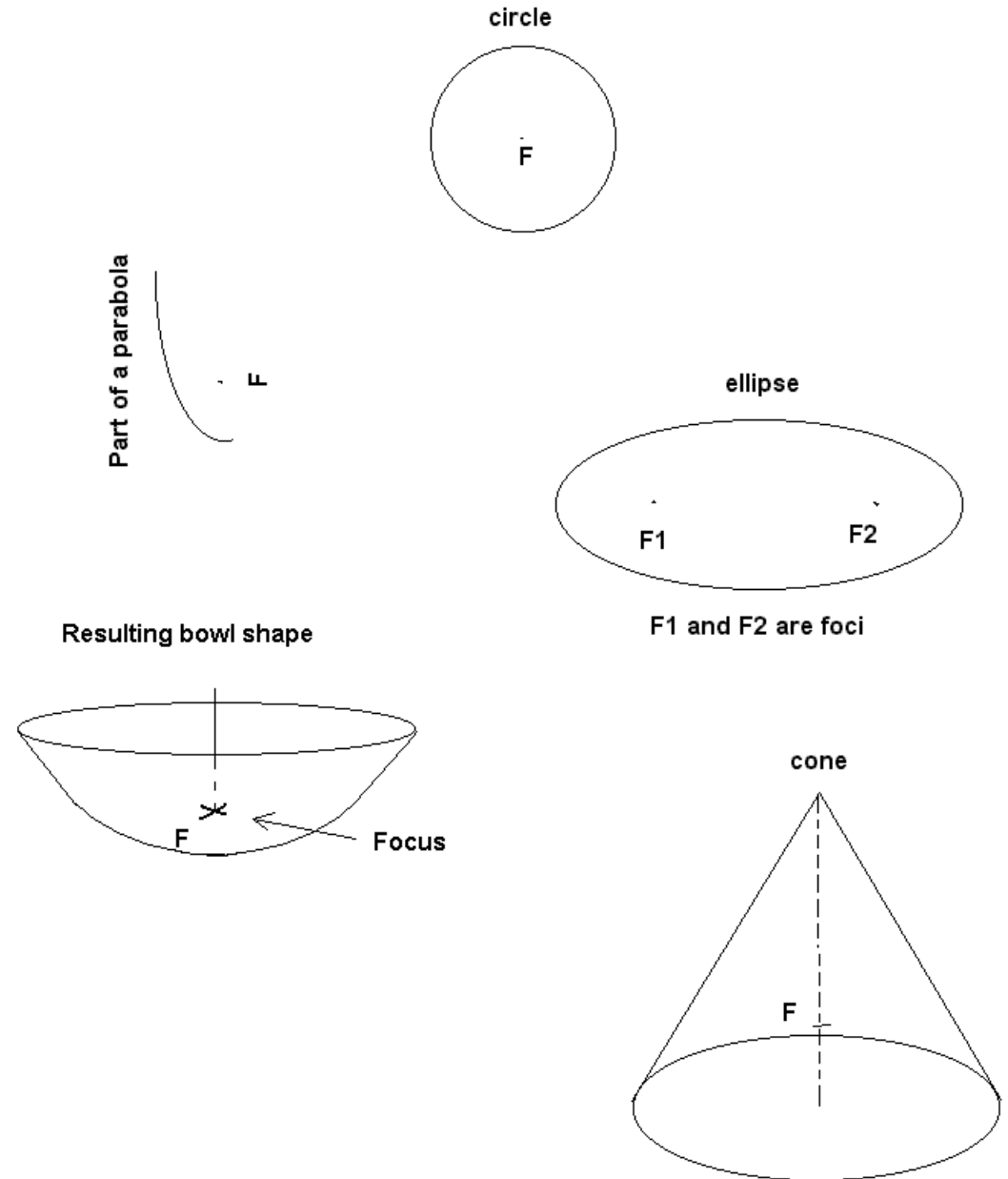
# 1.Sacred Geometry

## Natural Foci

A circle, as can be seen in the diagram, has a natural focus at its centre, a parabola has one within the arc, an ellipse has two within each arc and a cone exactly one third of the height along the vertical axis.

A natural focus does just that. If sound, light, bouncing particles or **any** radiant energy is used, then they all always meet at the same focus point.

This applies to other unseen or invisible energies. There is no exception.



## 2.Sacred Geometry

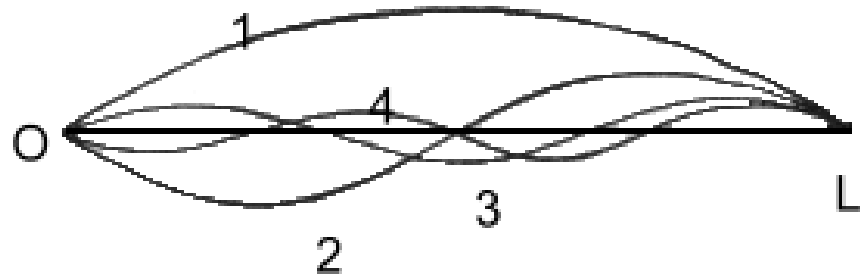
### Resonance and Harmony

Say, a single string is plucked. The single large wave form is the basic note but there are others sounding at the same time.

These are called harmonics.

The ratios between the basic note and the subsequent notes are always small integers, or whole numbers, so they are always in harmony with each other – hence the name. The harmonics are in harmony with the basic note being sounded.

The resulting harmonics are *incredibly exact* and a trained ear can hear *several* notes at the same time, although only the basic one was struck. That is Resonance.



Where :

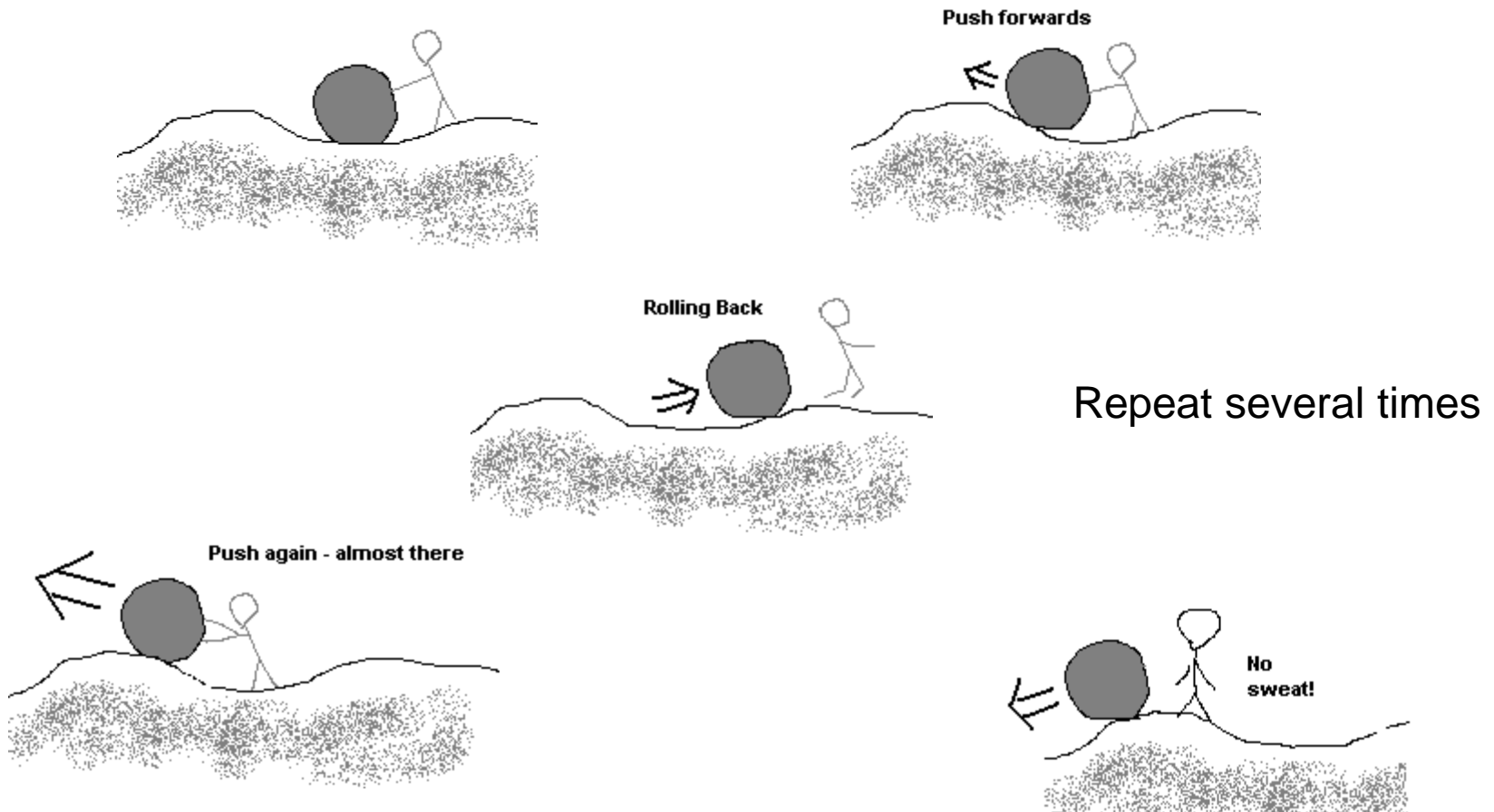
O and L are fixed points

1 is the basic wavelength of the string that is vibrating

2, 3 and 4 are all harmonics also sounding

Resonance occurs in different ways. A distance resonates by length, music by sound waves, gravity by mass, volumes by size etc. It resonates in its own kind, but not across kinds. So resonance can just as easily be felt, or subtly known in some way, rather than just heard.

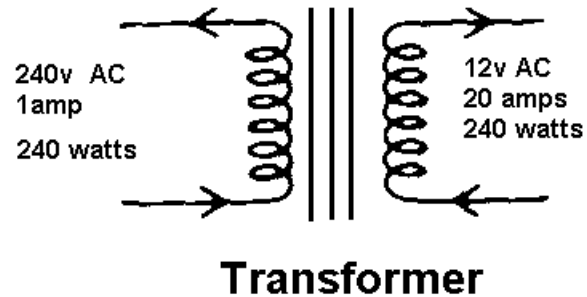
Resonance is a very powerful effect, the most famous example being the film of a bridge destroying itself as the wind resonates with the basic harmony of the structure. Another example is the proverbial opera singer singing such a pure note that a glass nearby might smash in resonating harmony.



Resonance builds up from nothing to a force that must be reckoned with.

# REMEMBER

A transformer changes the outward form of an energy flow – within its own kind.



A transducer changes the nature of the energy from one kind to another.

Petrol energy



Motion

A human body is a natural transducer.

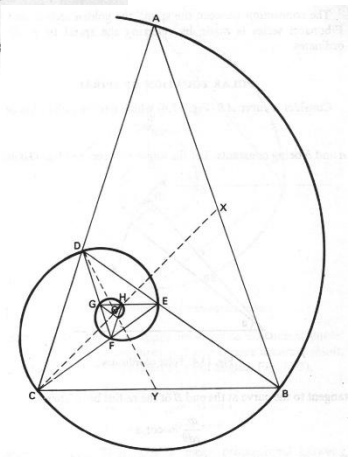
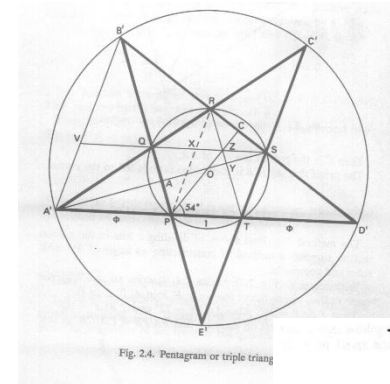
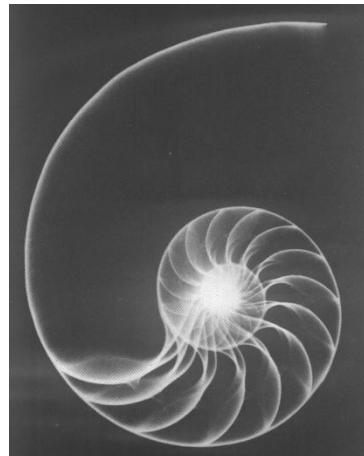
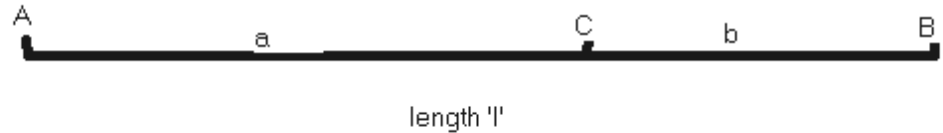


### 3. Sacred Geometry

#### Natural Numbers

A few numbers appear again and again in Nature, giving these numbers great significance. The most famous of these is NOT  $\pi$  but  $\phi$  - the 'golden mean' or 'divine proportion'. In this case C is a point such that length 'l':a is as a:b. Then C is the 'golden cut' of AB. The value is known as Phi and works out as 1.61803... The reciprocal of phi or b:a is therefore 0.61803... Coincidence?

Examples of the Divine Proportion are Nautilus shells, Sea shells, sunflower seed heads, leaf positions on climber stems, human body proportions, Convolvulus spiral, DNA spiral, breaking wave forms, and so on. It is also the 'right' or average ratio of a conventional rectangle and it appears in classic architecture such as in the Parthenon, or occult designs as the Pentacle.



## 4.Sacred Geometry

There is a tremendous amount of folk lore, supposition, observation and downright nonsense associated with Resonance and numbers. Numerology suggests each number resonates, or has an association, with distinct attributes. The most common of these in the realms of psychic or sacred geometry are 3, 7, and 13 – the sacred numbers of religions.

I consider that a 'sacred' structure is one where, above all, the shape and ratios used in its construction are essentially those that strongly figure 'earthly' numbers or natural numbers and sacred numbers, but also resonate with celestial dimensions. A consequence of these principles is that a structure constructed along these lines may have considerable 'power' if it is on the Earth, but if it was transported to Mars, for example, much of the anticipated power would vanish, for the ratios would no longer apply. The megalithic yard is essentially a *terrestrial* measurement. A Martian 'sacredness' would depend upon a Martian equivalent ratio of resonance. So the transported earthly structure to that planet would be diminished in 'feel' of 'rightness' or power. It would no longer be regarded as 'sacred'.

## 5. Chartres Maze – plus a hidden feature

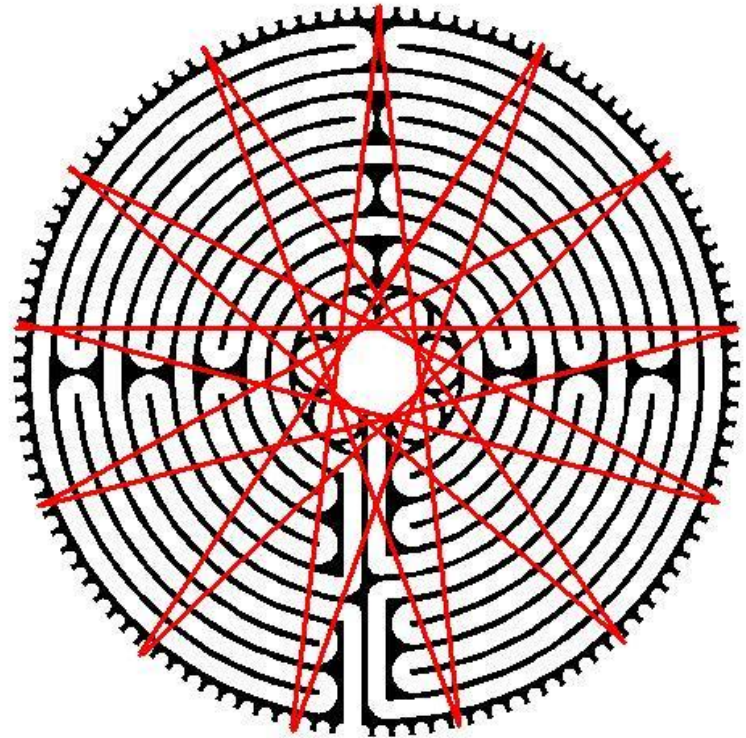
The Chartres Maze design includes several of these 'sacred geometry' factors.

The circles are concentric, emphasising the focus many fold. There are 13 circles.

The 13 pointed star is the only star shape that has the points on the outer cusps and the valleys tangential to the innermost circle.

The cusps are lunar days in a lunar year, although the solar year is single circle. The design is a much detailed symbol of the cosmos.

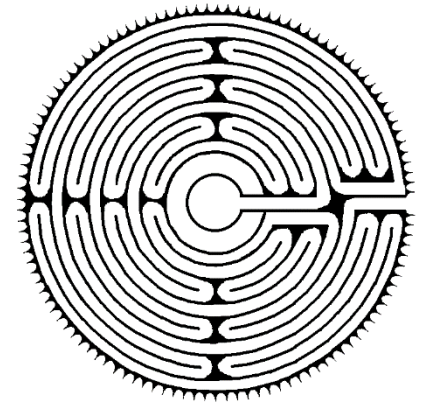
The chartres design maze at the **Mill** is 91 feet diameter. That is 7 times 13, uses the megalithic yard, and each circle is 7 feet bigger than the last. The star was depicted with crystals.



# SYMBOLISM

## 1. Psychological

As has been said, mazes hold mystery and symbolism that indicated the twists and turns in life, and how danger and changes of fortune were for ever present – just round the corner.



There are no false paths to Life's experiences.

The individual may feel that they have turned down a blind alley but every experience adds up to make the individual who and what they are. There are times that an individual looks back in shame, embarrassment or in horror.

In fact when we sometimes try to block out the past we inevitably end up with emotional problems or a cancer of the soul that can develop into a twisted outlook on Life or even into physical illness that includes a cancer of the body.

The maze is a symbol for the counsellor, priest or individual who wants that inner awareness and personal growth, for we have to embrace all aspects of our personality and past to begin to actualise our potential and individuality – or as Jung put it – to accomplish Individuation.

## 2. Inwards or Outwards

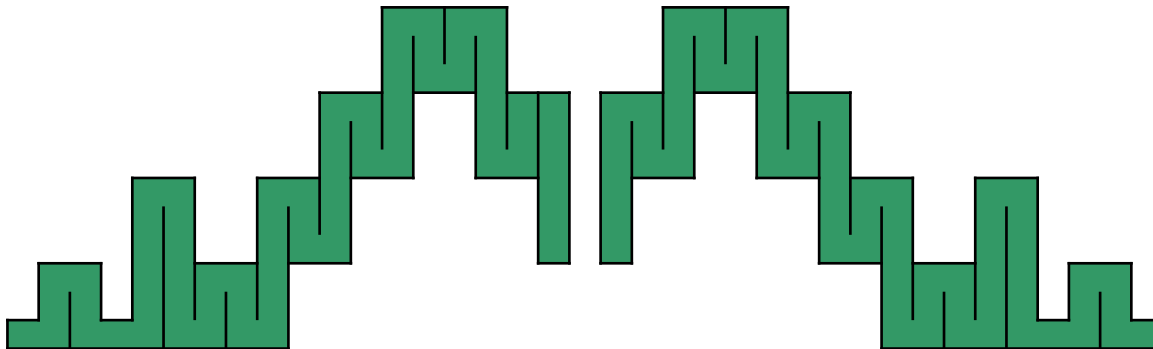
## Inwards

Travelling from the outside to the centre, symbolises the process of looking inwards at dreams, fears, strengths and weaknesses.

## Outwards

Travelling from the centre to the outside, symbolises the process of looking outwards at group dynamics, relationships, society, and how an individual copes with all of that.

# Maze Garden Turns and Sequences



The sequence of turns to the centre of the maze is the exact sequence of the turns taken from the centre to the outside. So the journey inside to self is the same journey as outside to others. Or in other words, how a person relates to self - or is at one with self, helps us to understand how to relate to others - or to be at one with others. Or again in Christian terms, the atonement with God through Christ within oneself, reveals the Spirit of Christ in His Body the Church.



### 3. Medieval Horoscope

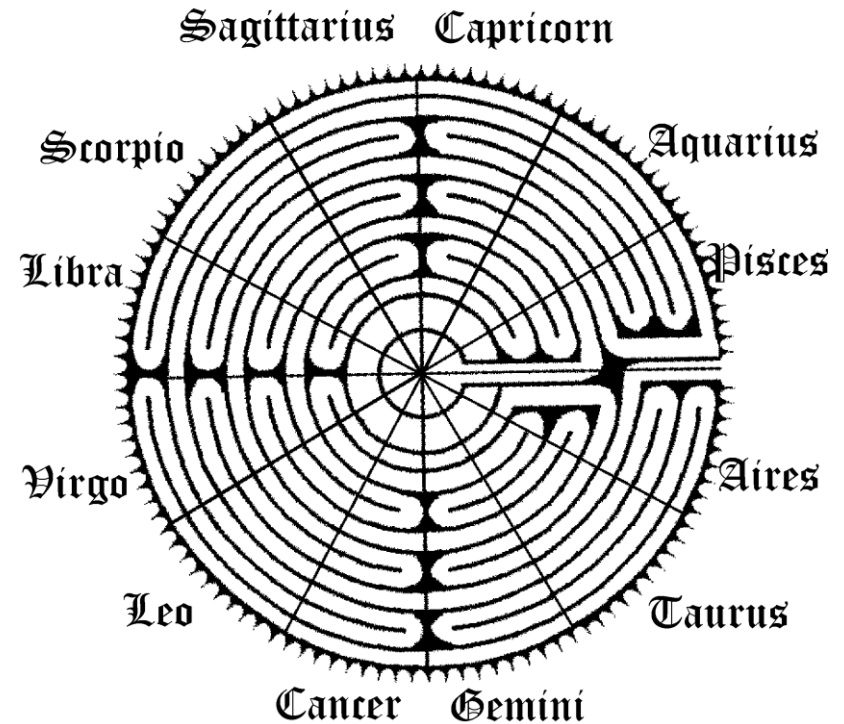
This was the natal chart of the Astrologer of the day!

The innermost circle represents the individual or Earth, the next is the Moon, then the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

With the discovery of the outer planets the past interpretation of Fixed Stars, Mind [Soul] and other medieval labels have been pushed further from the centre.

Nowadays the following circles would represent Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. There is even space for two of the largest asteroids.

The placing would be some kind of marker within the relevant circle and arc. It is really a pictorial representation, as close as possible, within a two dimensional diagram.





# HOW TO USE THE MAZE

A single candle can be used as a focus for meditation, whilst a circle of candles can magnify that effect many times over, especially if it is big enough to stand at the centre.

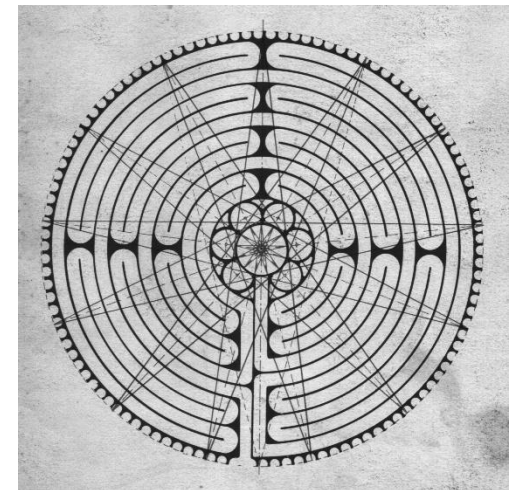


The cosmos can be represented by a picture. It is better to use a circle with objects along its circumference. Place yourself at the centre of the circle and the effect is magnified.



From the most simple design of rings of stones to signify the known major planets of the time, to a detailed cosmology of a Maze, so the idea takes shape.

The final profound symbol of Chartres has the Lunar year, the Solar year and the known planets and Fixed Stars.



# HOW TO USE THE MAZE

- Passive Use

The idea is to receive impressions of some kind or other. These might be within sight, or of the immediate vicinity, or even on a cosmological scale.

It might be that the participant desires to know something about themselves.

For the gifted, it is possible to be still and in a meditative state to receive impressions of a temporal shift.

- Active Use

In this case, the person using the maze is endeavouring to impose their will upon the energies or matrix created by, or through, the maze.

It depends upon the strength of will of the person, as well as the energies and construction of the place, as to whether their desire is fulfilled.

## 2. Passive Use

The maze should be walked as a meditative exercise and prelude to any work.

The psychological effect of simply being in a quiet, secluded valley sets the mode of operation. Nature is all around the participant, working its own brand of magic of peace and at-one-ment.

With knowledge of the different circles and arcs, a closer identification with specific aspects and influences of the cosmos or the personal world is achieved.

With a psychic ability and awareness, so the person walking the maze gradually attunes to the strength of those specific aspects, and can walk in step with the power – due to resonance. The shape and flow of energy will also become apparent. This is especially relevant if the maze was built to resonate due to sacred geometry, as at the Mill.

Reaching the centre, the person is still. He or she holds in mind the query or reflective stance necessary to receive an answer.

### 3. Active Use

It makes sense to suit the desired outcome with cosmological cycles and natural effect to maximise the sacred geometry resonance. The Moon's cycle is the most apparent, but the major sun festival days, the planetary conjunctions and the weather all play their part in the effectiveness of the operation.

This begins with a introspection as to what is desired, and the consequences of that action.

Usually the meditative exercise is employed to change 'mode' and awareness. However if the person or group are already prepared or adept, then this can be shortened in some form. The centre is reached. The resonating energies are felt.

Depending upon the desire, the visualised energies are altered to achieving that aim. Knowledge and ability of magic, prayer or blessing and cursing is an absolute necessity. The energies are transduced by the will of the human participant.

The maze is a most powerful focus and tool of natural energies, and a profound psychological symbol that evokes the psyche. However it can never be taken for granted in any way. The careless curse or insufficiently thought out desire has a habit of returning to haunt the offending participant.

It can be quite draining or tiring, even though it is inspiring at the same time. Do not forget to 'close down' or come back to normal in some way.



**Use with Knowledge, Ability and Wisdom.**