



CAERDROIA

*Caerdroia is an independent
journal for the study of
mazes & labyrinths*

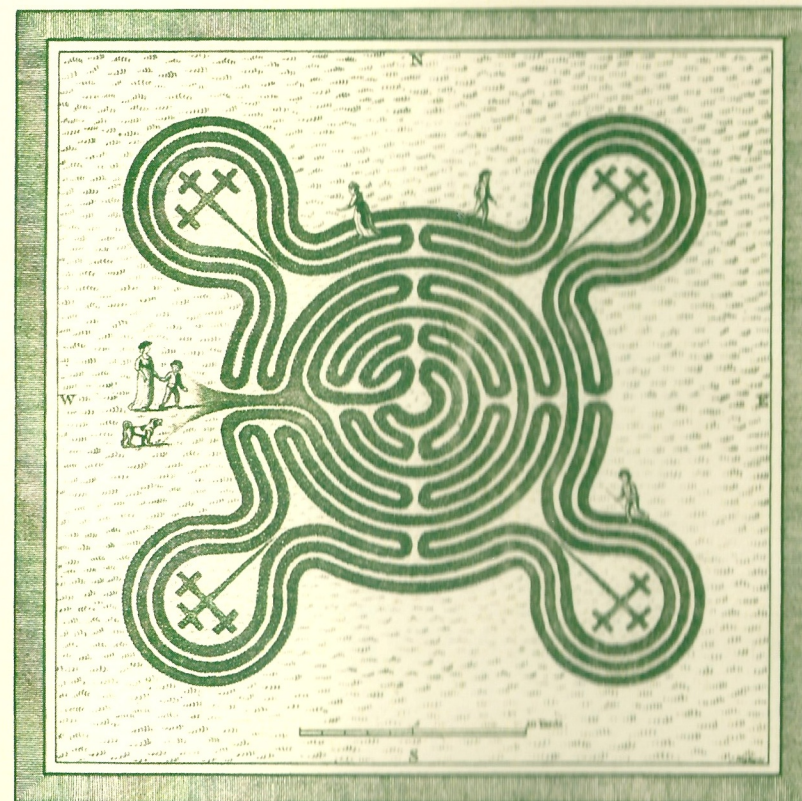
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THE JOURNAL OF
MAZES & LABYRINTHS



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The Journal of Mazes & Labyrinths

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The St. Euverte Labyrinth, Orléans



Alain Pierre Louët & Jill K H Geoffrion

Restricted access has made study of the “labyrinth” in the desacralized church of Saint-Euverte in Orléans, France difficult. References exist which speak of a thirteenth century labyrinth in the church.¹ A 9 x 9 meter labyrinth in this location, dated between 1855 and 1858, is also cited briefly in Kern, accompanied by a photograph with a partial view.² In “*L’énigme du labyrinthe*,” Jean Villette identifies it as “perhaps only a decorative floor paving that is sometimes mistaken as a labyrinth.”³ After recently receiving permission to visit,⁴ we discovered a black and white square pavement maze that dates to the period after the French Revolution when building restoration was undertaken during the episcopate of Bishop Dupanloup.

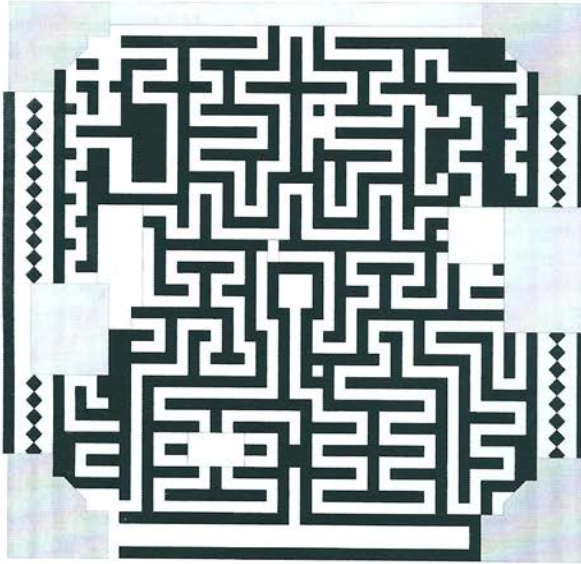
Situated in the east of the building, one step below and directly bordering the altar area, the maze extends westward from four entry points. The pattern covers the width of the nave. It was clearly laid around the pre-existing tomb of the fourth century bishop Saint Euverte on the north side; it was also built around the pre-existing pillars. On the south-western side the installation of a small, modern organ has partly obscured part of the design.



*The pavement ‘labyrinth’ in the nave of the church of Saint-Euverte, Orléans, France.
Photo: Jill K H Geoffrion, 2012*

The labyrinth at St. Omer, also in France, comes to mind as one considers the design of this example in Orléans. 1,849 alternating black and white tile squares measuring 22 centimetres (8 11/16 inches) on each side make up the maze, bordered on each side by larger tiles (12 30.7 cm, 12 inches) laid in a diamond pattern. A number of decorative crosses can be easily identified as one looks at the maze pattern and areas of restorations are also clearly visible. By offering this note, a diagram, and a photograph of the maze we are pleased to contribute to the growing body of knowledge of ancient and modern labyrinths and mazes in France.

Alain Pierre Louët and Jill K H Geoffrion, Chartres, France; November 2012



This diagram represents the 'labyrinth' as it currently exists. There have certainly been restorations that have changed the original design, and obvious repaired areas are marked with hatching in this diagram. The gray shaded areas represent the organ on the right and the tomb of Saint Euverte with its iron-work enclosure on the left. The pillars are also marked at the corners, where they impinge on the design. Plan drawn on site by Alain Louët in 2012, final graphic by Jeff Saward.

Notes

- 1 For example, French scholar Camille Enlart speaks of a silhouette of a church with three towers that may be linked to the city of Jerusalem in a 13th century labyrinth in the church. Enlart, Camille. *Manuel d'Archéologie Française: Depuis les Temps Mérovingiens jusqu'à la Renaissance. Tome II: Période française, dite gothique, style flamboyant*. Paris: Editions Auguste Picard, 1929, p. 818.
- 2 Kern, Hermann. *Through the Labyrinth. Designs and Meanings over 5,000 Years*. New York: Prestel, 2000, p. 157 (illustration 273).
- 3 "Enfin, ce que l'on prend parfois pour un labyrinthe à Saint-Euverte d'Orléans n'est peut-être qu'un pavage décoratif." Villette, Jean (1983). "L'énigme du labyrinthe." *Notre Dame de Chartres; Revue Trimestrielle*. Chartres, France: no.58, 1984, p. 5. This information is missing in the English translation (by Malcolm Millar) of this publication produced by the Cathedral, but is reproduced in a translation (by Robert Ferré and Ruth Hanna), published as *The Enigma of the Labyrinth*. St. Louis, Missouri: One Way Press, 1995, p. 7.
- 4 Robert Ferré and Linda Ricketts also joined us.