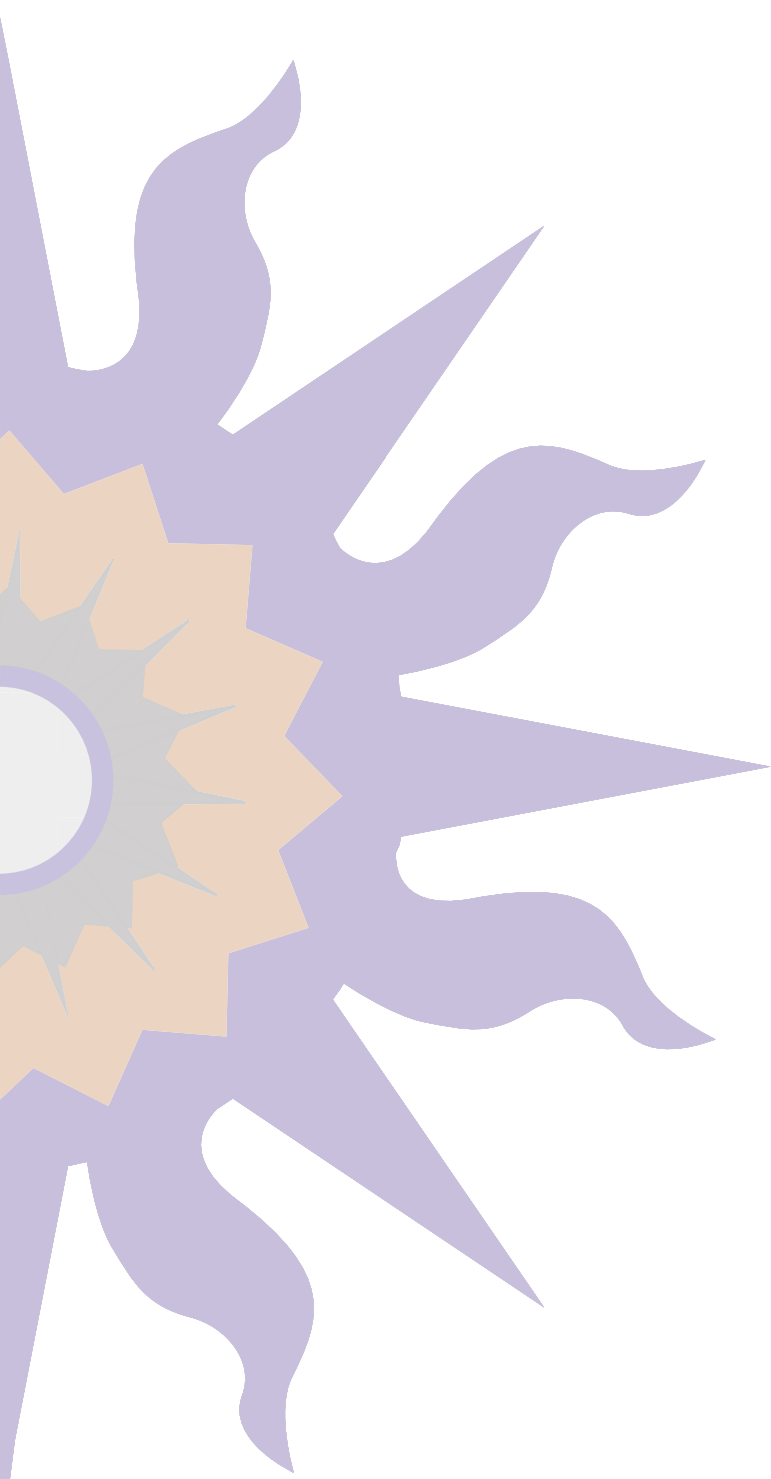


# THE CARNFUNNOCK MAZE

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## SECTION

# KEY STAGE 2

Links to The Revised  
Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum

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# Carnfunnock Maze & A Brief History of Mazes

## The Carnfunnock Maze

The Carnfunnock Maze is based on the winning idea in a competition organised in 1985. It is in the shape of Northern Ireland and has seven central spaces, one for each county and one for Lough Neagh. Over 1,500 mature Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) plants were used. By 1991 it was well established for its official opening, to mark Northern Ireland's contribution to the International Year of the Maze.

The maze is open to the public from Easter to October, as the leaves fall in November and do not reappear until April. Hornbeam can live for up to 150 years and we hope the Carnfunnock Maze will continue to fascinate, entertain and bewilder all ages for many years to come.

Note: Although the maze is in the shape of Northern Ireland, it is actually upside down when looking at it from the viewing platform and comparing it to a map.

## A Brief History of Mazes

Mazes go back in history at least 4,000 years. For the first 3,000 years they were entirely in the form of unicursal labyrinths, consisting of a single convoluted path, without junctions. These labyrinths were not puzzles, but were for ritual walking, running and processions.

In Greek mythology, the Minotaur\* lived within the Cretan Labyrinth, and was finally killed by Theseus, thus symbolically breaking the domination of King Minos of Crete over the city of Athens.

Historically, the demise of Crete occurred in the fifteenth century BC. Whatever the truth of this myth, the 7-ring Cretan labyrinth design was used on Cretan coins in the first century BC.

\* Minotaur: A creature with the head of a bull on the body of a man.



Elsewhere in Europe, different labyrinth traditions flourished. In Scandinavia there are still over 600 stone labyrinths along the shores of the Baltic Sea, with over half of them in Sweden. Many are said to have been built by fishermen, who walked through them in the hope of a good catch and a safe return. Their varied names – Julian's Bower, Maiden's Bower, Trojaborg - give further insight to their purpose, as an expression of the rites of passage into adulthood, courtship and marriage.

In England, Poland and Germany, similar designs were created as Turf Labyrinths, where stones were not so plentiful. Some English examples possibly date back to the Dark Ages, when they were created by Nordic settlers. The names Troytown and Walls of Troy recall the siege of Troy and the penetration of its walls by deception, whilst Shepherd's Race and Robin Hood's Race imply vigorous running. In Germany, unicursal turf mazes were used for ritual procession by apprentices as they reached adulthood.

In thirteenth century France, Medieval Christian pavement mazes were laid in the stone floors of gothic cathedrals and with names such as Chemin de Jerusalem they reflected recent journeys of the Crusades. Jerusalem was often depicted at the centre. The Medieval Christian maze design was cruciform and had 13 rings of paths. In walking or kneeling along its path, one could contemplate the fragile thread of time, and the path of life through death to salvation. Many English turf mazes are thought later to have been recut to this design, in order to banish their earlier pagan connections.

Formal gardens began to be established throughout Europe. They were enclosed to protect against the foraging of wild animals, and to provide shelter for better cultivation. Puzzle hedge mazes became an amusement of kings and princes, and to start with were only found at the wealthiest palaces. This trend probably began during the Italian Renaissance, with the recreation of classical gardens in the style of Imperial Rome, when Pliny had described horticultural mazes in gardens. The popularity of princely mazes moved northwards across Europe to Germany, France, the Netherlands and Britain. In England, Nonsuch Palace, Theobald's Palace and Hampton Court Palace each had mazes.



In the nineteenth century, the unprecedented wealth of the Industrial Revolution provided the first stirrings of a leisure industry, and many new hedge mazes were built in parks and other places, for general public amusement. Wealthy private families also added mazes to their gardens. The design of the maze at Hampton Court Palace (1690), the world's oldest surviving hedge maze, was copied at least a dozen times across the English-speaking world during the 19th century. In the first half of the twentieth century, two world wars forced gardens across Europe to be neglected, and many mazes were irretrievably lost.

## Modern Mazes

The world-wide upsurge of mass leisure, travel and tourism since the 1970s has created a new market for mazes. As a result, more mazes are being built today than at any time in their history.

Modern mazes are man-made and can be found in all shapes, patterns and sizes - their design inspired by simply anything. They can be made using a variety of materials such as hedges, stones, wooden panels, mirrors, maize, pavements, grass, turf, mosaic glass and even water!

However each different maze has the same puzzle elements: a complex network of paths, with junctions, choices and dead-ends; twisting and deceptive paths weaving between tall barriers with an elusive goal to be reached.