The Isles of Scilly Troy Towns

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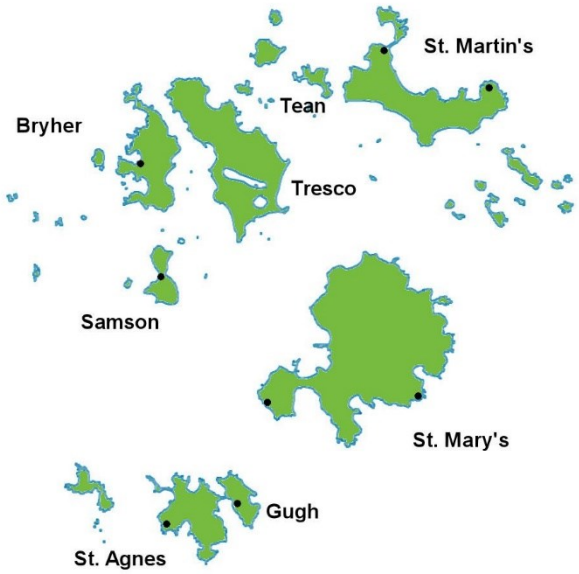
Introduction

The Isles of Scilly archipelago is situated 28 miles (45 kilometres) southwest of Land's End, Cornwall, the most south-westerly point of the British Isles and is formed from over 100 islands and rocky crags, of which only half a dozen of the largest are inhabited. The islands are famed for their climate, wildlife and scenery and are also home to the largest collection of stone labyrinths in Britain. One of these is of some antiquity and the remainder are an ever-changing selection of more recent examples, often in dramatic and remote locations.

During the spring of 2017 and 2018, Kimberly and I were fortunate to spend two splendid weeks visiting the islands, and the report that follows records the stone labyrinths and mazes that we were able to find on those occasions, along with some historical background on their origins. In *Caerdroia* 23 we published a similar study based on a field visit during April 1990,[1] and comparison will be made to the labyrinths visible on that occasion, changes that have occurred since that time, photographs taken on an earlier visit in 1983 and archival material in the Labyrinthos collection.

Visiting the Isles of Scilly is a complex endeavour, but certainly worth the effort and expense. Accommodation on the islands is relatively limited, especially during the popular summer season, and travel between the islands is by small open deck launches that run at intervals from the harbour on St. Mary's, the largest of the islands. A passenger ferry runs to St. Mary's all year round from Penzance, Cornwall, and flights are available from Land's End, Newquay and Exeter, although all can be subject to the rather turbulent weather that can affect the islands, situated as they are out in the Atlantic Ocean.[2]

Likewise, finding the labyrinths on the islands is not always straightforward. A few are marked on maps and signboards on specific islands, but only the example on St. Agnes is well known and marked on the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map of the islands. This map, widely available on the islands and various local guide books are essential for visitors wishing to explore, as mobile phone coverage is notoriously patchy and only a few of the labyrinths show clearly on Google Earth and similar online resources.



The Isles of Scilly and the locations of the stone labyrinths on specific islands

Historical Background

As is so often the case with such monuments, the origins of most of the stone labyrinths on the Isles of Scilly are surrounded with a considerable degree of uncertainty, as in many cases their construction was a spur of the moment event, and whether built by islanders or visitors, the details went largely unrecorded at the time.

Without doubt, the only labyrinth on the islands of any great antiquity is the "Troy Town" on St. Agnes. Early writers on the mazes and labyrinths of the British Isles, Trollope (1858) and Matthews (1922) included, overlooked this labyrinth. Likewise, early authors that describe the landscape and monuments of the Scilly islands, including notable works by Borlase (1756), Troutbeck (1796), Woodley (1822), North (1850) and Whitfield (1852), make no mention of the Troy Town, although most describe the nearby St. Warna's Well in varying degrees of detail.

Ironically, the first positive record of the Troy Town would seem not to be in a book, but in the foreground of a photograph of the wreck of the S.S. Earl of Lonsdale, taken by the noted local photographers Gibson & Sons in 1885. The labyrinth, of perfect classical form at that time, is shown in fine detail and it is already possible to note that additional stones overlie the originals (part-buried, but still poking out from the turf in the outermost circuits), although one might suspect that the Gibsons had perhaps 'tidied up' the labyrinth a little before taking their iconic image.

The St. Agnes Troy Town and the wreck of the S.S. Earl of Lonsdale.
Photo 1885 by Gibson & Sons, reproduced from an original print in the Labyrinthos Archive

The first mention of the labyrinth in print then appears in a local guide book published two years later in 1887. The *Guide to the Isles of Scilly* by father and son authors J.C. and R.W. Tonkin had already appeared in earlier editions of 1875 and 1882 with no mention of the Troy Town, but its inclusion in the 1887 edition and the appearance of the Gibson's photograph of the monument a couple of years earlier might be connected. One can imagine that visitors might be asking about the unusual arrangement of rocks in the photo, and the Tonkins obligingly added the following description to the new edition of their guide book:

> Close to the edge of the cliff is a curious enclosure called the Town of Troy. It takes its name from the Troy of ancient history; the streets of ancient Troy were so constructed that an enemy once within the gates, could not find their way out again.
>
> This enclosure is composed of an outer circle of stones with an opening at one point, the whole supposed to represent the walls and gate of Troy. Within this there are several rows of stones, generally circular in form; the space between these represents the streets. It presents quite a maze, and but few who enter, can find their way out again, without crossing one of the boundary lines. It is not known when, or by whom it was constructed, but it has from time to time been repaired by the islanders.[3]

In the same year, the Troy Town also caught the attention of folklorists, when Miss M.A. Courtney described it in the 1887 edition of the *Folk-Lore Journal*:

> There is a curious labyrinth on this island called "Troy-town," which it is popularly supposed to represent; but all intricate places in Cornwall are so denominated, and I have even heard nurses say to children when they were surrounded by a litter of toys that they looked as if they were in Troy-town.[4]

Several more descriptions follow in guide books of the period, all essentially repeating the same description, and all declare "the origin of this singular tracery is unknown," or words to that effect.[5] Claims to know the identity of the creator of the labyrinth would not appear until the early 20th century, when writing in the *Isles of Scilly Church Magazine* in 1912, the Rev. J.C. Kerry states:

> The old puzzle at Troy Town was put together in the year 1729 by Mr. Amor Clarke, who was at that time Master of the Lighthouse. He was buried on April 8th, 1741. Mr. Clarke has still descendants living on St. Agnes, and there can be no doubt that he introduced the Christian name of Amor into the island, which many have since had given to them. We hope that this old puzzle, said to be the representation of the streets of Troy, will always be maintained as it is an interesting link with the past, and now that the lighthouse is closed, is to us a connection with the old days when St. Agnes provided one of the few lighthouses in the Kingdom.[6]

The same essential story is then repeated, but with subtle differences by Robert Morton Nance in his presentation to the Royal Institution of Cornwall delivered in 1923:

> … the St. Agnes Troy Town, built, as Mr. A. Gibson tells me, by one T.A. Clarke, son of a former lightkeeper there, and a collateral ancestor of a present one, when, in 1729, he was in the island on a visit – from what place, British or foreign, seems unknown.[7]

It was around this time, in May 1921 to be precise, that the St. Agnes Troy Town received a Royal visit from the Prince of Wales (subsequently King Edward VIII) and a splendid photo of the Prince (standing cross-legged, leaning on his walking stick) and his party watching two smartly dressed chaps striding round the coils of the labyrinth, subsequently issued as a commemorative postcard by the Gibsons, shows the Troy Town in good condition at that time. Several further issues of postcards featuring the Troy Town also provide evidence for the continued care and maintenance of the labyrinth during the early and mid-20th century.

The Prince of Wales at the Troy Town, May 1921. Gibson & Sons postcard in the Labyrinthos Archive

The launch of *The Scillonian* magazine in 1925 subsequently became a splendid, if somewhat eccentric repository for local folklore and recollections, but it was not until the late 1940s that the topic of the origin of the Troy Town first triggered a flurry of correspondence within its pages. The noted author and poet Geoffrey Grigson started the ball rolling with an article in the September 1947 edition, where he questions the 18th century origin, and pointing to the 'ancient' origins of stone labyrinths in Scandinavia, postulates a much earlier construction.[8] A potted version of his discussion on this topic, again favouring a Scandinavian origin, then appears in his 1948 book *The Scilly Isles*, where he summarises his thoughts with the following comment:

> In guide-books the maze is ascribed to the handiwork of some bored sailor in the eighteenth century. But it is likely to have been made very much earlier, even if the stones have been renewed from time to time. And it has given its name to the neighbouring farm of Troy Town.[9]

Alongside Grigson's 1947 article, the editor of *The Scillonian* provides a helpful footnote that clarifies that:

> There is no tenement named Troy Town in the detailed survey of the islands made under the Commonwealth in 1650 when Troy Town farm appears to have been part of the tenement "commonly called Port Eagles" – i.e. Periglis – then occupied by Bernard Hicks.[10]

A further twist in the tale is then provided in a letter published in *The Scillonian* in 1948, where Mrs. Augusta Hicks – a direct descendant of the Hicks family that occupied the farm in 1650 – informs her readers, rather indignantly:

> Having read the article by Geoffrey Grigson on St. Agnes Troy Town, I wish to contradict him in all his theories that Troy Town was put there prior to 1650. It actually was put there by an ancestor of mine in 1726, who was at that time a keeper on St. Agnes Lighthouse, by the name of Amos Clarke, a native of Rotherhithe, London, and whose death is recorded in the Church Register at St. Mary's.
>
> I wish also to say that Troy Town Farm was built and tenanted by a William Hicks successively from early 1600 until it was vacated by the Hicks family in 1928.
>
> P.S. – I would just say, if anyone had been interested enough to look, they could have seen the date and the name above the Troy Town in stone, which could be found there up to within 30 years ago when it was destroyed by hooligans. I have seen it there many times.[11]

This letter is the obvious source of the alternate date of 1726 that is sometime repeated for the construction of the labyrinth, although her claim that a name and date, also formed from stones, was formerly to be seen alongside is a novel addition to the story. This additional feature does not appear in any of the early photos of the Troy Town, as far as I am aware, but is not without parallel at other stone labyrinth locations, historic and modern.[12]

A further flurry of notes and correspondence on matters labyrinthine, and the Troy Town in particular is then reported in *The Scillonian* between 1951 and 1953, seemingly triggered by the then recent 'discovery' of the labyrinth inscriptions at Rocky Valley near Tintagel on the North Cornwall coast, and the various speculative dates bandied about at the time for their origin. One correspondent goes so far as to suggest that the carvings "are of same design as our Troy Town on St. Agnes. Probably their origins are the same, and date back to the time of Solomon's famous labyrinth."[13] Another letter writer, also talking about the Rocky Valley carvings, comments that while the "St. Agnes Troy Town can have no possible connection with the Tintagel carvings, or any other ancient examples of this design, but it seems to me just possible that Clarke may not have actually built the maze, but have restored, or uncovered it."[14]

These opinions add further confusion to the age of the Troy Town, pushing back its possible origin much further and suggesting that whenever in the 1720s Amor/Amos Clark built the labyrinth, he was in fact only restoring an earlier example. And just to muddy the waters further, into this discussion enters another version of the St. Agnes Troy Town story, when E.J. Honiton of Pendeen, Cornwall writes in June 1952:

> From those who have been living on St. Agnes, and who have listened to tales by the old people, one understands that a shipwrecked sailor named Clarke made the maze named Troy Town. There is a possibility it may have been simply copied from a Greek coin on which it was depicted, perhaps likening the islands to that maze. Apparently, the sailor married a Hicks, of what is known as Troy Town Farm….[15]

Now a shipwrecked sailor has entered the arena, to join lighthouse keepers and their sons, Vikings and prehistoric tin traders as the original founder of the Troy Town. To attempt to make some sense of all of this, another contributor to *The Scillonian*, Kenneth Sisam, pens a lengthy note in the September 1952 edition, where noting that the Troy Town is not mentioned by any authors prior to 1887, sums up the various theories circulating at the time and comments:

> It cannot be very old in Agnes. The farm there takes its name from the maze. The difficulty is that an old pattern may be imitated at any time. None of the turf or rock mazes [elsewhere in Britain or Scandinavia] has been dated with certainty, and there are at least three opinions about the age of Agnes Troy Town:
>
> (i) That it is one of the rare pre-Christian examples that appear along the Atlantic coast... Yet it is hard to believe that these small loose stones would keep an intricate pattern for thousands of years against weather, vegetation, rabbits etc….
>
> (ii) That it was made about a thousand years ago by Vikings who brought the design from Scandinavia. This second view, which is open to the same objection as the first, is taken by Mr. Grigson in his book "The Scilly Isles." The Vikings possibly had rock-mazes in their Scandinavian home, but on all the coasts they raided for two centuries they don't seem to have built any other specimen.…
>
> (iii) That it was made by T. A. Clarke, son of the lightkeeper, when home on a visit in 1729. A statement so detailed must be based on a written note such as a lightkeeper might make. According to C. J. King's *Guide*, prepared about 1925, Mr. Albert Hicks says he has documentary evidence for it. One would like to know exactly what this evidence was, but I have not been able to trace it. Still, I can pick no hole in the story. Anybody who had seen the pattern in turf on the mainland, or in boulders on the Baltic coast, could quickly lay it out on this small scale with stones from the beach nearby. If a visitor made it for amusement with the materials that were handiest, that would explain why there are no others like it in Scilly or the British Isles. T.A. Clarke was a relation of the Hicks family, who are good authority for anything happening on Agnes; and the family interest would account for the maze being kept in repair in recent times.[16]

Sisam clearly favoured the notion that the Troy Town was most likely created by the lighthouse keeper's son in 1729. A further note from A.A. Dorrien Smith of Tresco Abbey appears in the June 1953 edition of *The Scillonian*, where the alternate dating of 1726 (clearly repeating the 'facts' as presented by Augusta Hicks in 1948) is again presented,[17] and with that, the correspondence on the matter concluded for the time being.

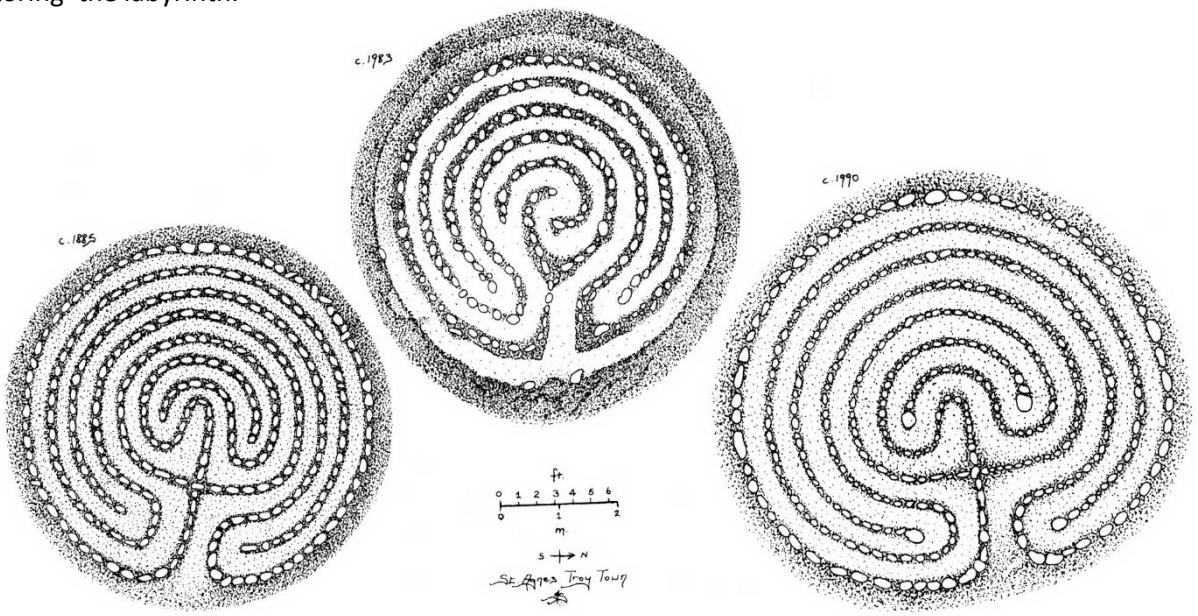
At this point all of the principal variations of the story have been established in print, and mostly in the pages of *The Scillonian*, a journal widely read by those living on and with connections to the islands at that time – and indeed still in production to this day.[18]

This process of recording an oral tradition, and the subsequent accumulation of odd snippets of further information along the way, some perhaps reliable, others less so, all written down long after the event, is surely what has led to the range of slightly confused explanations that can be found for the origin of the St. Agnes Troy Town in guide books and serious studies alike. In reality, all of these variants on the basic story of an origin sometime in the 1720s lack documentary evidence, but on balance would seem to be quite plausible. Labyrinths were well-known and widespread in England during the early 18th century, indeed the chalked labyrinth graffiti in Chaldon Quarry, Surrey, are of the exact same classical design and were likewise created by young men in the same decade.[19]

At the same time as this interest in the history of the St. Agnes labyrinth is debated during the 1940s and 1950s, a new group of stone labyrinths start to appear on the Isles of Scilly. Scattered around various other islands in the archipelago, most are quite simple in form, often little more than meandering paths and spirals, but the majority are likewise in remote and often dramatic locations, adjacent to footpaths and trackways favoured by walkers and tourists. Examples at Giant's Castle on St. Mary's and on the northwest end of St. Martin's (detailed below) are certainly from this time period and more were added by visitors throughout the subsequent decades as tourism to the islands increased.

Curiously though, no mention of these 'new' labyrinths are recorded in *The Scillonian*, despite the evident local interest in the St. Agnes Troy Town at this time. Indeed, it is only the appearance of photos of some of these later examples in books and magazines that provides any sort of timeline for their existence until enthusiast interest since the 1980s provides more details.

But the 1950s were not the last time that debate about the St. Agnes Troy Town seethed. In 1988 the St. Agnes Troy Town had deteriorated, largely due to an abundance of visitors with careless feet, and the design had become rather confused and prone to rearrangement. In November of that year, a group of "opinionated do-gooders," as the author of an outraged note in *The Scillonian* described them, set about controversially 'restoring' the labyrinth.[20]



The changing design, size and orientation of the St. Agnes Troy Town in 1885, 1983 and 1990. Drawings by Jeff Saward, 1990

Despite claiming to have found the remains of an earlier labyrinth buried beneath the remains of the damaged arrangement of stones, they removed those stones and created a new labyrinth on the site, slightly larger than the original and shifted slightly in position and orientation. Unfortunately, they made no record nor photographed their 'discovery' of a buried labyrinth and their written account of the process contained a number of discrepancies.[21] Many on the islands (and much further afield) were outraged by this unauthorised reconstruction of the historic Troy Town, and articles about the whole sorry affair were published in *The Scillonian*, in *Caerdroia* and in national newspapers.[22]

However, this unexpected and unfortunate publicity for the St. Agnes Troy Town also seems to have coincided with an upturn in the building of stone mazes and labyrinths elsewhere in the archipelago. A number of new examples appeared in the following few years, including three together at Popplestones on the island of Bryher and several were added to the so-called "maze field" on the island of St. Martin's. Again, *The Scillonian* helpfully documented some of this most recent phase of labyrinth building on the islands in an illustrated article published in 1991.[23]

While the recorded histories of many of these more recent stone labyrinths and mazes on various islands in the Scilly archipelago is often scant and lacking in documentation, the existence of a range of photographs, both published and in photographer's collections, coupled with eye-witness recollections allows us to conclude that they have all been created within the last 75 years or so. Details of their origins, such as they are, are provided in the catalogue that follows. Much like the uncertainty surrounding the precise age and origin of the St. Agnes Troy Town, first debated a century or so ago, some of these more recent examples will undoubtedly survive to become the 'historic monuments' of the future, and will surely trouble a new generation of writers and researchers in turn!

St. Agnes

Situated adjacent to the shoreline on the west side of St. Agnes, north of Long Point and south of Troy Town Farm, the Troy Town stone labyrinth is undoubtedly the 'original' labyrinth of the Scilly Islands. OS map reference SV 875078. Early photos (from the 1880s onwards) show that it was originally of seven-circuit classical design, and around 5.7 meters in diameter, but by the early 1980s it had lost its outer circuit of stones and shrunk to 4.8 metres with a looping path arrangement at its centre. Following its controversial restoration in 1988, its design again reverted to classical form, but the diameter had grown to 7.2 metres and the orientation and location likewise shifted a little.[24] Now (2018) the design has once again become a little confused due to the wear and tear of many visitor's feet, and the turf between the lines of rounded rocks is all but worn away, leaving the stones prone to disturbance and rearrangement.

While various authors have suggested that this labyrinth might be 1000 years old or more, usually based on little more than speculation and assumptions, the most popular, and probably most likely, explanation credits its construction to Amor Clark, the son of the island's lighthouse keeper, when he visited the island in 1729. Others claim this event took place in 1726, but either way, a date in the 1720s would seem quite plausible.

The St. Agnes Troy Town.
Photo: Jeff Saward, 2018

Another stone labyrinth briefly existed at Long Point, around 50 metres to the south of the Troy Town. OS map reference SV 875077. Constructed in August 1986, it was 9.1 metres in diameter and of a seven-circuit 'Baltic' design with a double spiral at its centre.[25] Although all of the stones that formed the labyrinth had been removed when I visited the site in 1990, traces of the worn pathway persisted at that time, and photographs of this labyrinth in photo albums and magazines will surely surface and cause confusion in the future.[26]

The 'Baltic' style labyrinth,
St. Agnes, 1986.
Photo: Nick Mann

Gugh

Two small stone labyrinths, both of spiral form, one with five circuits and another with only four circuits were recorded in 1988,[27] both noted as fairly recently constructed at that time. A comment in an environmental assessment of the island published in 1986: "There is also a problem with the recent appearance of stone mazes which should be discouraged" would likewise seem to suggest an origin in the early 1980s.[28] One of these spiral labyrinths, 2.8 metres in diameter is still clearly visible, if a little overgrown, to the southeast of the sand bar connecting Gugh to St. Agnes, beside the start of the path that leads up over the island to Dropnose Porth. OS map reference SV 888083. While not the most exciting example on the islands, the location, looking across The Cove, with the sandbar and St Agnes in the background is quite beautiful on a sunny day.

The simple spiral labyrinth, Gugh. Photo: Jeff Saward, 2018

St. Mary's

Despite being the principal island of the archipelago, and the one that attracts most visitors, especially the day trippers from Penzance, only one stone labyrinth currently surviveson St. Mary's. Commonly known as the "Stone Maze," it is situated adjacent to the footpath running in front of the Giant's Castle promontory fort, around 240 metres northeast of the seaward end of the island's airstrip. OS map reference SV 924101. The design, a curious spiralling affair with a couple of choices in the path, is roughly circular and c. 6 metres wide with a large block of white quartz occupying the centre. Its origin is apparently undocumented, but islanders we spoke to on the occasion of our visit in 2018 could remember it being present ca. 1950, and essentially little changed since that time. It is known that there was a military lookout post situated on the cliffs here during WWII, and the maze might possibly also date to that period?

The stone maze at Giant's Castle, St. Mary's. Plan by Jeff Saward, 1990; photo: 2018

St. Martin's

By far the largest collection of stone labyrinths and mazes on the islands are to be found on the island of St. Martin's. An extensive group of stone mazes and labyrinths are to be found situated on a flat area (known locally as the "maze field") adjacent to the shoreline littered with rocks opposite White Island, on the northwest tip of the island. OS map reference centred around SV 923170. In total at least 15 stone mazes and labyrinths, along with initials, names and dates, have been constructed at this location over the years, and the precise number at any one time fluctuates as new examples are constructed, old ones become overgrown and stones are plundered from one to build another. Once again, the initial origin of this group of stone labyrinths is rather uncertain. The first examples were supposedly constructed by bored aircrew stationed on the Scilly Islands during WWII, although no documentary evidence can be found for this assertion.[29] When we spoke to the Isles of Scilly Museum staff in May 2018, an inhabitant of St. Martin's in her youth clearly remembered their presence when she was a child in the late 1950s, so they certainly date from somewhere in the mid-20th century, maybe around the same time that the origins of the St. Agnes Troy Town were being debated locally?

A square maze at the St. Martin's maze field in the late 1970s. Photo: Godfrey Nall, Labyrinthos Archive

Many more have been added since that time, principally by the steady trickle of tourists that walk the coastal pathways of the island during the summer months. Photos from the 1970s and 1980s show a number of recently installed constructions,[30] some with complex meandering designs, others little more than large spirals and when I visited the location in 1990 there were over a dozen clearly visible, both square and circular in shape. Now (2018) there are 5 or 6 examples walked by regular visitors to the site and consequently kept in good condition, and a number of others hidden amongst the long grass and encroaching vegetation. One of these survivors is of the classical type (the same as the original form of the St. Agnes Troy Town) and was originally constructed by the author in April 1990, one of the few certain construction dates and a good example of how a stone labyrinth of this type can survive for the best part of 30 years with no maintenance other than the steady passage of feet.

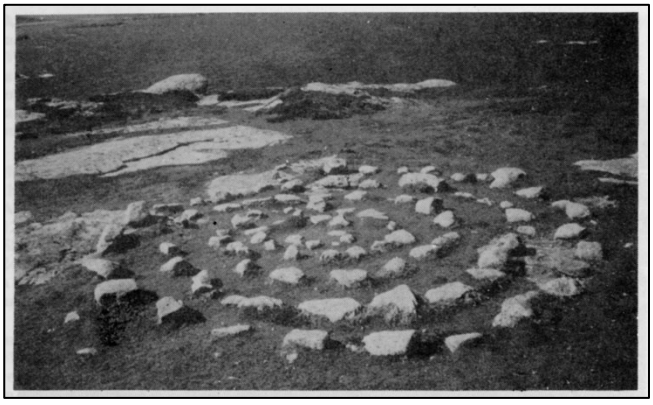
Part of the St. Martin's maze field in 1990, with the newly built classical labyrinth centre of frame. Photo: Jeff Saward

Left: the classical labyrinth on St. Martin's in 2017.

Photos: Jeff Saward 2017

Below: one of the large spiral labyrinths in the St. Martin's maze field.

Another stone maze on St. Martin's is to be found just a few metres to the northwest of the Daymark obelisk on the northeast tip of St. Martin's. OS map reference SV 942161. Although now rather overgrown and difficult to see amongst the grass, a photo of this maze (actually little more than four-circuit spiral arrangement) published in the winter 1991 edition of *The Scillonian* magazine might suggest that it was constructed shortly prior to this time, as I have no recollection of seeing this stone arrangement when I visited the site in April 1990.



The St. Martin's Daymark stone spiral, ca. 1990/91. Photo: Glynis Reeve, courtesy of the editor of The Scillonian

Bryher

A small stone labyrinth is to be found adjacent to the footpath that runs between the shoreline of Popplestone Bay and Great Pool, on the central west side of the island. OS map reference SV 874150. The labyrinth is formed from rounded rocks gathered from the adjacent storm beach and is 5.0 meters in diameter with two larger rocks placed at the entrance. The design is basically a spiral with five circuits, but with several choices and switch-backs that increases its complexity and actually turns it into a simple maze of sorts. A few meters to the NW of this are a series of concentric rings of stones buried in the long grass, around 8.5 metres in overall diameter, that originally formed another larger labyrinth, recorded as being created in 1989,[31] and beyond that was another square maze of similar size (built in 1990) and linked to it by a 'corridor' of rocks, all now buried in the long grass. The smaller labyrinth, still visible and in good condition (2017), was presumably also created by visitors sometime in the early 1990s, although it is not visible in a photo of the two larger labyrinths published in *The Scillonian* magazine in 1991.

The Popplestone mazes in 1990. Photo: Glynis Reeve, courtesy of the editor of The Scillonian

The stone maze at Popplestone Bay, Bryher. Photo: Jeff Saward, 2017

Samson

A simple spiral labyrinth consisting of three concentric circuits was illustrated in *The Scillonian* magazine in 1991 and described as recently constructed at West Porth adjacent to the rocky shore on the western side of this small uninhabited island. It is not certain if this 'labyrinth' still exists.

Teän

Another recently constructed labyrinth was reported in *The Scillonian* in 1991 on the uninhabited island of Teän. No further information about this labyrinth has been reported in recent years and it probably no longer exists.

Summary

In total, around 25 stone labyrinths and mazes have been recorded on the Isles of Scilly over the years, one on, Teän and Samson, two each on St. Mary's, St. Agnes and Gugh, three on Bryher and somewhat more than a dozen on St. Martin's, at two separate locations. Around ten of these labyrinths still exist in tolerably good condition or are clearly visible, if a little overgrown, at the time of writing (2018). Undoubtedly more will join the roster in coming years and a few of those currently in existence will in turn become overgrown. Built predominantly by visitors to the islands, rather than local inhabitants, they are a dynamic and distinctive feature of the islands and have been surprisingly little influenced by the current popularity of labyrinths that has developed since the mid-1990s. Indeed, the peak period of construction was probably during the 1970s and 1980s, since when their popularity has declined a little and a number have become neglected and overgrown.

These numerous stone labyrinths and mazes documented on the Isles of Scilly provide a wonderful insight into the process by which groups of stone labyrinth of this type can become established, proliferate, come and go, and create a complex of monuments that can often be difficult to interpret and place in any sort of chronological order. This isolated group of labyrinths in the extreme southwest of England has obvious parallels with similar groups of labyrinths in Scandinavia and Arctic Russia, the numerous labyrinths on the Swedish island of Gotland and those on the Solovetsky islands in the White Sea being obvious examples.[32] On the island of Bolshoi Zayatsky in particular there is a similar mix of around 20 labyrinths (many overgrown), of various designs and sizes, some of obvious but rather uncertain antiquity, others clearly more recent 'copies' and small-scale adaptations of the 'originals' standing nearby.[33] Fortunately, the examples on the Isles of Scilly are of slightly more recent origin for the most part, and some are clearly documented by the existence of photographs and eye-witness accounts of their creation. However, they remain none the less a model for how this process can, and surely has, panned out at locations throughout north-western Europe, wherever such labyrinths made of rocks, adjacent to a plentiful supply of materials and a steady stream of visitors, are found.

Jeff Saward, Thundersley, England. May 2018.

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Notes & References:

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5. Owen, James G. *Faire Lyonesse: Guide to the Isles of Scilly*. Bideford, 1897, p.78.
6. *Isles of Scilly Church Magazine* (October 1912, p.3). Notes by Rev. J.C. Kerry of St. Agnes. The only known (photo)copy of this obscure pamphlet, in the Isles of Scilly Museum, lacks the important page, but fortunately the text is reproduced in full in a note by Molly Mortimer in *The Scillonian* 110 (June 1952), p.119.
7. Nance, R. Morton. "Troy Town" *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, vol. XXI, pt. 3 (71), 1924, p.260-279. A transcript of a paper he read in June 1923 (incorrectly dated 1913 in the published paper), Nance credits his source as Alexander Gibson, one of the photographer family that documented the everyday life and shipwrecks of the Scilly Islands for many years, and also in the process provide the first record of the Troy Town, a photo taken in 1885.
8. Grigson, Geoffrey. "The St. Agnes Troy Town" *The Scillonian* 91 (Sept. 1947), p.119-122.

9. Grigson, Geoffrey. *The Isles of Scilly*. London, 1948, p.52.
10. Editorial note inserted in "The St. Agnes Troy Town" *The Scillonian* 91 (Sept. 1947), p.121.
11. Correspondence from Mrs Augusta Hicks. *The Scillonian* 93 (March 1948), p.54.
12. Initials and dates are sometimes seen at the "maze field" site on St. Martin's for instance, and a similar historic example comes from Aksi in Estonia, where a stone labyrinth had boulders spelling out "1849 DW" laid alongside, to mark the year that David Weckman, a Swedish officer, supposedly constructed the labyrinth. Kraft, John & Urmas Selirand. "Labyrinths in Estonia" *Caerdroia* 23 (1990), p.32-37.
13. "Scilly, Day by Day - St. Mary's" notes from Miss E.P. Rogers. *The Scillonian* 107 (Sept. 1951), p.140-141.
14. Correspondence from Alec Gray. *The Scillonian* 109 (March 1952), p.43-44.
15. Correspondence from E.J. Honiton. *The Scillonian* 110 (June 1952), p.119.
16. Sisam, Kenneth. "Troy Town" *The Scillonian* 111 (Sept. 1952), p.189-192.
17. Dorrien Smith, A.A. "The Maze in St. Agnes" *The Scillonian* 113 (March 1953), p.47-48.
18. *The Scillonian* (edition 286 and counting) is currently edited by Clive Tregarthen Mumford and published twice a year. Copies are available from Mumford's Papershop in Hugh Town, St. Mary's and a full collection of back issues is housed at the Isles of Scilly Museum, also in Hugh Town.
19. "The Chaldon Labyrinths" online at: www.labyrinthos.net/labyrinthosarchive.html
20. "St. Agnes" notes from Cyril Hicks. *The Scillonian* 229 (Summer 1989), p.119-121.
21. Broadhurst, Paul. "The Lost Labyrinth" *The Fountain* 23 (1989), p.11-12.
22. See for instance: T*he Scillonian* 229 (1989), p.121; *Caerdroia* 22 (1989), p.6-11; *The Observer,* March 10, 1991.
23. Reeve, Glynis. "A-maze-ing" *The Scillonian* 234 (Winter 1991), p.155-157.
24. Saward, Jeff. "Labyrinths of the Scillies" *Caerdroia* 23 (1990), p.43-47.
25. Mann, Nick. "A New St. Agnes Troy-Town" Caerdroia 20 (1987), p.24-25.
26. see *Meyn Mamvro* 5 (1988), p. 19, for instance.
27. Personal correspondence from Mark Valentine, October 1988. A postcard mailed from the Isles of Scilly in the Labyrinthos Archive.
28. "Gugh" Natural England conservation report, published 1986.
29. Kern, Hermann. *Labyrinthe*, München, 1995, p.450. The 3rd edition (produced after Kern's death) gives this origin but provides no reference. I was also told this story back in the early 1980s, but again the tale came with no factual evidence.
30. Bord, Janet. *Mazes and Labyrinths of the World*. London; Latimer, 1976, p.70, has photos of the St. Martin's mazes taken in the early 1970s and the Labyrinthos archive has various photos taken by Godfrey Nall in the late 1970s and Bo Malmburg in 1982.
31. Reeve, Glynis. "A-maze-ing" *The Scillonian* 234 (Winter 1991), p.155-157.
32. "Gotland Trojaborgs" online at: www.labyrinthos.net/labyrinthosarchive.html
33. Mizin, Vyacheslav. "Two Stone Labyrinths on Bolshoi Zayatsky, Russia" *Caerdroia* 47 (2018), p.23-34.

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Addendum

Since this article was written another former labyrinth has been identified on the island of St. Mary's. Illustrated in the *National Geographic* magazine, July 1967 edition, page 130, but with no precise location details, the photograph was taken by regular National Geographic photographer Bates Littlehales and captioned "Mysterious maze by St. Mary's shore puzzles even the islanders. One theory: Bored British Soldiers shaped it about 1800."

While the attribution to soldiers more than 200 years ago is perhaps doubtful, the origin of this stone labyrinth, to judge from the photo, probably a simple spiral, might have been suggested by its location adjacent to a wall surrounding Colonel George Boscawen's Battery on the west side of the Garrison defences to the west of Hugh Town on the island. OS map reference SV 895102.

While the charming photo in the National Geographic is undated, it would seem fair to assume in may have been taken the previous summer, as it was part of a photo feature about the Isles of Scilly written by Alan Villiers and largely illustrated with photos taken (presumably on the same research trip) by Bates Littlehales, so probably ca. 1966. No trace of the labyrinth remains today, but it may also have been another one of the stone mazes created in the late 1950s or early 60s, when tourists began to create these ephemeral installation alongside coastal paths on the islands.

The St. Mary's Garrison labyrinth, ca. 1966
Photo: Bates Littlehales

My thanks go to Teän Roberts for figuring out the former location of this site, via a contact on the islands whose sister is the young girl in the photo and by lining up the photograph with the rocks in the background!

Jeff Saward, January 2025