

Engraved plan, with manuscript annotation to verso, tear to lower central portion affecting part of the printed image and publishing details, skilfully repaired, a few brown marks.

UNRECORDED PLAN OF HAMPTON COURT MAZE

Plan of the Maze in Hampton Court Gardens.

Author
GOUYN, John

Publication date
May 1797.

Publisher
J. Gouyn, 34 Snow Hill

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Engraved plan, with manuscript annotation to verso, tear to lower central portion affecting part of the printed image and publishing details, skilfully repaired, a few brown marks.

Dimensions
115 by 75mm. (4.5 by 3 inches).

Notes
Commissioned at the turn of the eighteenth century by King William III, the hedge maze in the gardens of Hampton Court Palace remains the oldest maze of its kind in the United Kingdom. The trapezoid multicursal maze was designed by George London and Henry Wise, and originally planted

across one-third of an acre using hornbeam, which was later replaced by yew. Although not particularly difficult to navigate, the maze stood out from the single-path mazes, usually spiral, which were more typically found in seventeenth century gardens. Later it even served as inspiration for the psychologist Edmund Sanford, who created similar mazes on a smaller scale for laboratory rats, so that he could observe their recognition, problem solving and memory faculties.

The present plan is an early example of the prints issued of the maze, some of which contained a timeline of the construction and use of Hampton Court within its pathways. It is likely that such prints were issued as souvenirs. Hampton Court was opened to the public in 1838 during the reign of Queen Victoria, but no monarch had resided at the Palace since the reign of King George II, and immediately became a popular tourist attraction. It is unclear whether the public were able to access the maze when the present print was published, in 1797. It is relatively simple, being an aerial view of the maze with three trees illustrated at its centre. To the verso, however, are contemporary hand-written instructions on how to reach the middle, explaining “the way in & out”:

“going in – miss the 3 first turnings to the left, then keep to the right hand side in.
the way out miss the first 4 turnings on your right hand – then keep to the left hand side the way out.”

John Gouyn (fl. 1790-1800) was an engraver and publisher working in London during the late eighteenth century.

Rare. We have been unable to trace another example of the plan in institutions or appearing at auction since the Second World War.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 18377

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