Hampton

There is a famous maze in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace, which has been made even more famous by the funny chapter about it in the book entitled “Three Men in a Boat”. In that chapter, one of the three men was convinced that he could perfectly easily find his way out of the maze simply by continuing to take the first turning to the right. He paid his twopence entrance fee and once he was inside he began to put his thoery into practice, but three-quarters of an hour and two miles later began to panic; nevertheless he persevered until at last he realised that he had once again passed the half of a bun on the ground, that he remembered he had noticed there seven minutes earlier.

Last year Lord Weymouth opened an even bigger maze to the publik. This one is made from 16,180 yew trees. It is so complicated that the owner has had to install some “cheating boxes” here and there, giving people directions for finding the way out. The man who designed this new maze thinks that the one at Hampton Court is far too simple and he claims that anyone can get out of it by just turning consistently to the left. In the Weymouth one, there are two sections, one of which is fairly complucated but the other one is very much more so. At one point a person will discover a seat position at right angles to the hedge, and then later he will believe he has returned to the same seat, but actually it is not, because there are two of them.

Another famous maze, much further back in history, is the labyrinth at the Palace of Knossos on the island of Crete. At the very centre of this underground complex, so ran the Greek legend, dwelt a sinister bull-like monster called the Minataur.

The king’s daughter became the accomplace of a daring young Greek called Theses, suggesting that he took with him into the labyrinth a ball of silk yarn, and unwound it out as he walked, he would later be able to retrace his steps by following the silk trail.

We are unable to cater for visitors of school age.