

Game *Lusus Trojae*, which they had enjoyed as youths in the Circus Maximus in Rome'. For reasons explored in the next section, I doubt the almost universal claim that the name Troy Town, commonly associated with labyrinths, had anything at all to do with the ancient city of Troy.



Figure 3: *The Troy Farm labyrinth, Somerton, Oxfordshire*

Leaving aside a local tradition quoted by Barnes⁷ that the Somerton labyrinth was cut by a shepherd on open common land, I suspect that more reliable clues to the date of the Somerton labyrinth might be suggested by the fact (recorded in the VCH) that the lordship of Somerton had been held before the Norman conquest by Ketel, a Dane; or else by the fact (noted by Pennick)⁸ that in the eleventh century Somerton belonged to Bishop Odo of Bayeux, where there is still a pavement labyrinth inside the cathedral.

As for the survival of the Somerton labyrinth into the present day, it may be explained by the fact (noted by Harrington) that the village was always strongly High Church and royalist – tendencies which might have protected the labyrinth during the depredations of the Puritan years. Certainly, according to Hutchison,⁹ folk customs such as maypole dancing, with a May King, May Queen, May Garland, and May Doll, were still faithfully observed there in the mid-twentieth century; the VCH

⁷ Barnes, W.G., Letter to *Country Life*, 7 December 1929*.

⁸ Pennick, Nigel, *Mazes and Labyrinths*, London: Robert Hale, 1990.

⁹ Hutchison, G.M., Manuscript account of May Day Ceremonies in Somerton (filed in ORCC 100), 1959.*