

## Embrea Wooded Places of Interest 4: Hydras In Smoke Maze

A huge vegetation Maze set in the dense, always misty, Hydra Forest that surrounds it. Eight roads approach the Maze from the map's edges (GMs might use an 8-sided die to randomly decide which way the party approaches from; use the Maze Hut numbers as a guide, if so). The internal hedges are all densely impassable, often thorny and floral, and are of typical tree heights. All the Maze vegetation is carefully clipped and topiarised, and is in excellent condition, although that does not prevent the greenery from having been designed to deliberately encroach over the paths in places. Note that the trees inside the outer line of hedges are notably taller still than the hedges, and taller than most of the trees in the Forest beyond the outer hedge. The Maze's paths are hard-packed dirt, like the roads leading into it. The name "Hydras In Smoke" is a very obscure reference to mist or fog, "hydra" meaning "water", and smoke a comment on the apparent density of mist or fog. Others less familiar might think it has different connotations, however!

Notes on the labelled map features follow. First though, some more general points.

The misty edge to the mapped area is because, like all the Embrea Places maps, the Hydras In Smoke Maze does not link directly to any other specific location in the city. Instead when leaving the mapped zone (or sometimes only when passing some form of threshold within it - GM's choice), the party can return either to the Wooded Places map, or the Embrea Official Guide map, from where the GM can select a new location for the players to visit.

While scales are provided alongside the map, accurate to the features as drawn, and directions in these notes refer to the standard pattern of north being towards the map's top as viewed, east to its right-hand edge, and so on, none of these elements need be considered strongly fixed. Such things in the Faerie Realm can be quite fluid, to fit whatever the GM may prefer.

The featured text also beside the map could be used to enhance the experience of players in the Maze, or ignored, as suits the GM's needs. It reads: "Ends & beginnings. There are many white butterflies and black moths flitting among the roses and thorny briar patches."

For greater clarity, note that the FCW file has a toggle to allow the on-map labels to be turned-off, if desired. Another toggle allows the internal layouts of the few mapped buildings to be shown, while a third provides GMs with a superimposed view of the layout for the entire Maze, to help in planning and running trips through it.

### Aspects of Hydras In Smoke Maze

\* **The Bandstand:** A large, circular, blue-roofed, pillar-supported, open domed structure, with a raised internal floor. This is a bandstand from where daily performances are carried out. Although there is little space nearby for spectators and listeners, the music

can be heard from some distance away nearby, often within the vagaries of how sound travels - or fails to - around vegetation.

\* **Bowling Green:** An open hexagonal green space. Bowls are available for games, stored around the edge-paths.

\* **Dark Green:** A “D”-shaped open lawn, with dark green mown grass.

\* **Goldenshaw:** A golden building with a round tower at its northeast corner. The rooms inside are all open to the underside of the roof, as there is no upper storey. Meals and refreshments are served here, either indoors, or on tables across the open area surrounding the building.

\* **Grand Square:** While this area forms a large square pathway with the usual hedges around it, and trees in its middle, its shape can only really be appreciated as a square from above.

\* **The Hexagon:** A hexagonal hedged pathway, which like Grand Square, is difficult to identify as such from the ground.

\* **Hydra Forest:** The vast, dense, misty woodlands surrounding, and indeed forming, the whole area of the Maze.

\* **Little Square:** Very similar to Grand Square, and also scarcely recognisable as such from ground level. Little Square though has a cross-path cutting over one internal corner of its overall square shape.

\* **Maze Huts 1 to 8:** Eight separate, small, pale-cream-painted huts around the Maze’s periphery, where the main routes from outside pass into the Maze proper. In each, advice can be had about negotiating the Maze, albeit often in a cryptic form, and food and drink can be provided in small amounts for those without any. There are no mapped guides, however, nor are there living guides available. As noted in the introductory paragraph, the eight approaches give a random D8 option should GMs wish.

\* **Mrs. Trellis’s Tearoom:** A small wooden building close to the Maze’s centre, operating as a tearoom run by the powerful Fey being, Mrs. Trellis. She has a strong north Welsh accent, and a tendency to lapse into full Welsh when stressed. She usually forgets people’s names as soon as they have told her them, unless they are their True Names. Those she never forgets. Superb cream teas are available here.

\* **The Oathouse:** A small “L”-shaped wooden building, a restaurant, set in an open square with parasol-shaded tables outside.

\* **Pale Green:** An irregularly-shaped open lawn of neatly-clipped, low-growing, pale green moss.

\* **Redcross House:** A red-brick-and-tile building in the shape of a cross, serving refreshments. Uncovered wooden long-tables are scattered across the open areas surrounding it.

\* **Strollers Green:** An open rectangular mown lawn.

\* **Tennis Court:** An open circular green where tennis can be played. Equipment is stored in small wooden bins around its edges. There are no markings on the grass, however.

\* **Thirsty Place:** An open pathway circle, with a completely dry, round fountain in its middle. It looks as if there has never been any water here, as not even rainwater collects in the pool.

\* **The Washroom:** Another open pathway circle, this time with a fully-functional, clear, clean, freshwater fountain in its middle.