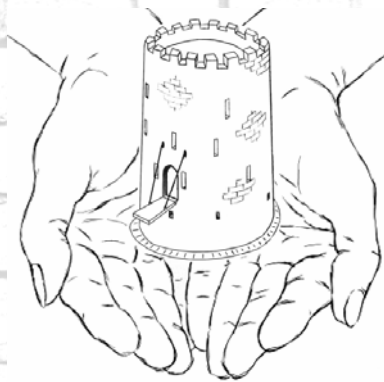
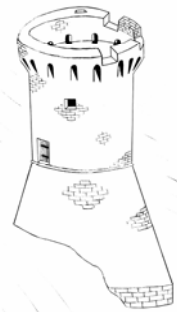
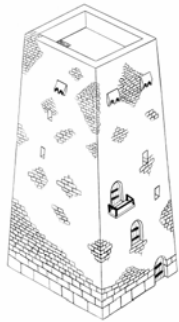
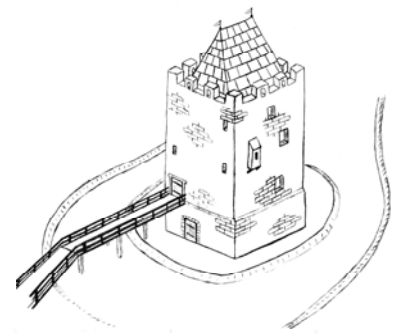
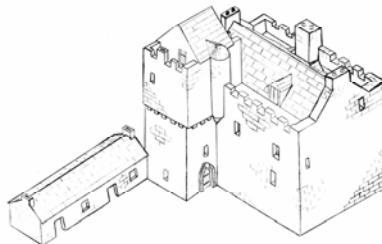
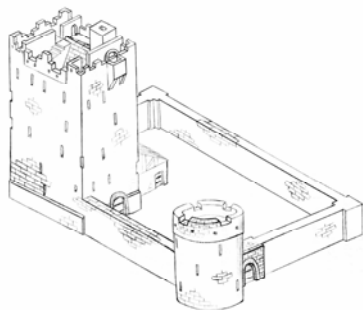


# Compact

# Castles

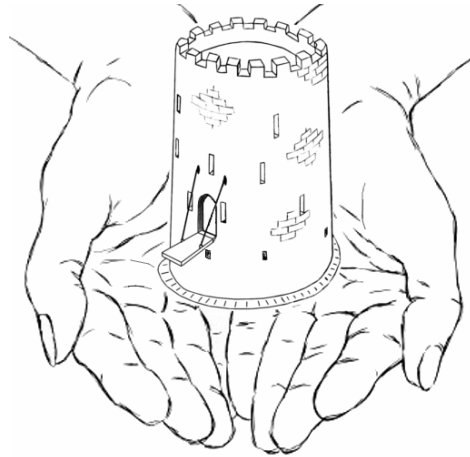


Written and Illustrated by  
Dan Howard



# Compact Castles

By Dan Howard



Written and illustrated by Dan Howard

Reviewed and playtested by David Ammann, Chris Conner, Markus Hanrath, and Sean Manning.

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*Here Regnault collected ditch diggers,  
wood workers, burden bearers, and ox drivers,  
and other workers, and architects of castles and ditches,  
assisted by men at arms and the principal men of  
his country, and the earth was raised into a mound,  
and around this a ditch dug for defence....*

– Lambert of Ardre (13th C)

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## Author's Note

After spending weeks looking for a roleplaying supplement with a selection of small historical castles to use in a campaign, I discovered that there weren't any. It was hard to believe that in the last three decades, no roleplaying publisher had compiled a book of historical fortifications with the level of detail required by gamers. Some came close; an important influence for this work was *The Palladium Book of Weapons and Castles*. It is one of the few roleplaying publications that provide the gamer with genuine, historical castles, rather than fantasy creations, but many were too large for this author's needs.

The solution was to wade through dozens of books and hundreds of websites trying to find suitable candidates. Of particular difficulty was trying to locate floor plans with a key that showed the function of each room. Gamers also need to know how the castle looked at the time it was in use, but most references only had photos of the castle in its present ruined state or they were renovated so drastically that they barely resembled the original building.

This book is intended to save readers the frustration and disappointment faced by the author during his fruitless search for a ready-made RPG aid. The castles here are the result my research, including painstaking reproductions of floorplans from old Victorian textbooks and archaeological reports, and countless attempts to reconstruct each castle using nothing but a pencil and the author's mediocre artistic skills. It is hoped that this book fills a niche that has been left unoccupied in the past.

## About the Author

Dan Howard has an Arts degree in History and Classical Studies, and has written a book titled *Bronze Age Military Equipment*, for Pen and Sword Books Ltd. He was also co-author of *GURPS Low-Tech* and author of many articles and supplements for Steve Jackson Games. Dan holds a 2nd dan black belt in Oh Do Kwan Tae Kwon Do and has competed internationally. Other interests include military history, ancient armour research, permaculture gardening, and renewable energy. He lives in Maitland, Australia, with his wife and three children.



# Compact Castles

*Peaceful it stands, the mighty pile  
By many a heart's blood once defended,  
Yet silent now as cloistered aisle,  
Where ring the sounds of banquet splendid.*

– Gerald Griffin

Have you ever been in the middle of running a campaign and needed a small fortification or manor house to drop into a location? Suppose the players want their characters to set up a base of operations and are looking for a tower or small castle. What if they ask about the house of the lord of a small town? How many guards are there likely to be over in that watchtower? Maybe you need to decide on a hideout for the local bandit chieftain.

There are plenty of books with information about large castles and fortified cities, but not many about smaller constructions, and almost none with enough detail to be useful to a gamer. This book is the answer. It is a compendium of historical keeps, towers, and fortified houses from all over the world. Each entry is a small, standalone, fortified building with floorplans ready to print out.

## Introduction

What is a castle? The question is more difficult to answer than many suspect. In its broadest sense a castle is just a fortified building. At some arbitrary point, it stops being called a “castle” and starts being called a “fortified town”. Other terms such as keep, fort, fortress, bastion, and such like, are used to describe certain types of castle or part of a larger fortification, and usually only serve to confuse the issue. The building’s method of use doesn’t help clarify matters either; a castle could range from a purely military construction that was only occupied during times of war, to a simple house with a wall and reinforced door. Most castles sit somewhere between these two extremes. The common factor is that all of them are, at least partially, defensive in nature – either because of strong construction, or location, or a combination of both.

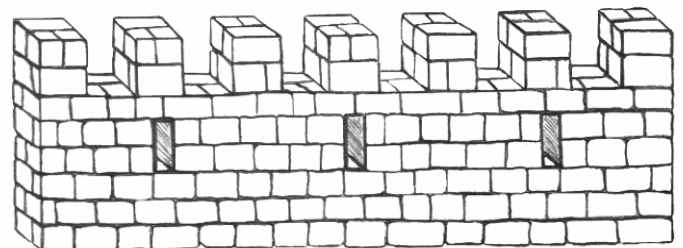
A *fortalice* is a small fortified building. The word is derived from the Medieval Latin, *fortalitia*, which comes from the Latin *fortis*, meaning “strong”. This book is a collection of fortalices – castles intended for a small complement of occupants. Each of the 15 entries has the history and description of the building, an

illustration showing the overall structure, and detailed floorplans.

Some of the plans are simplified from the originals to make them easier to use in-game and some parts have had to be reconstructed because, today, the castle is no longer completely intact. If the building had undergone renovations over its centuries of occupation then, where possible, the plans in this book are of the building when it was in its original condition. Also noted is its *Wall Strength* rating (p. 9), giving the reader an idea of how difficult it would be to breach the defences, along with an estimated number of *occupants* (p. 8).

Each entry is divided into two parts: the first contains information needed by the GM, and the second has enlarged floor plans to spread out on the table for the players to use. Some details that only the GM should know, like room numbering and secret chambers, have been removed from the large plans. The basic function of each room is specified in the castle’s description but details about furniture and fittings are generally not known. In any case, the GM would want to alter the layout to suit the setting in which the castle is going to be used.

However, while the fortalices in this book are real-world examples, there is no reason why a suitable building cannot be dropped into any low-tech or fantasy locale. With small alterations, it is possible for the GM to recycle the same building for use in several locations. How these castles are used in a campaign depends on the setting; some are more suitable in an urban situation while others are best on the frontier. *Threave Castle* (p. 70), for example, would be appropriate for a fief on the marches of a kingdom. *Lunenburg* (p. 33), on the other hand, would be better situated on the outskirts of a town, possibly near a river. *Barholm* (p. 11) and *Beldorney* (p. 16) would make nice manor houses in the country.



# Terminology

Here, compass directions have been abbreviated to their initials; for example, NE means “north-east” or “north-eastern”. “Century” has been abbreviated to C, so 15th C means “fifteenth century”. The abbreviation GM means “Game Master” - the referee of a roleplaying game. The floorplans in this book use symbols that are explained in the key in this chapter (see *Floorplan Key*, right).

# Glossary

Many strange terms are used when discussing military fortifications. The ones used in this book are defined below.

**Barbican:** An exterior defence located at the entrance of a castle. It confined attackers to a narrow passage, slowing them down and making it easier for defenders to target them.

**Bailey:** The courtyard inside the walls of a castle.

**Battlements:** The top of a castle where the *parapet* (see below) is located. The *crenels* are the gaps and the *merlons* are the solid sections at the top of the wall. A series of alternating crenels and merlons is called *crenellation*.

**Belvedere:** A raised turret or pavilion.

**Caphouse:** A gabled turret or small chamber, usually at the top of a stair, leading out onto a parapet.

**Cesspit:** The opening in a wall in which the waste from the castle’s latrine is collected.

**Curtain Wall:** The defensive wall around a bailey.

**Daymark:** A navigation aid similar to a lighthouse but without the light, so it is only visible during the day.

**Drawbridge:** A heavy bridge spanning a ditch or moat that can be raised to prevent entry.

















**First Floor:** This is the second storey of a building; the one above the ground floor. So the “second floor” is actually the third level. Any levels below the ground floor will be referred to as *basements*.

**Gatehouse:** A structure around the entrance of a castle consisting of towers, bridges, and barriers to protect it from entry.

**Hoarding:** A covered wooden gallery affixed to the outside of a castle wall. It improves the field of fire; in particular, hoardings allow defenders to see (and drop objects) straight down at the base of the wall.

**Loop:** A narrow window designed to allow an archer or musketeer to shoot attackers while remaining behind cover. The interior wall behind the loop is cut away at an angle so that the defender has a wide field of fire.

## Floorplan Key

|   |                                    |   |                 |
|---|------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
|  | Compass - points north             |  | Door            |
|  | Loop                               |  | Reinforced Door |
|  | Staircase - arrow points up        |  | Sliding Door    |
|  | Spiral Staircase - going up        |  | Trap Door       |
|  | Spiral Staircase - going down      |  | Fireplace       |
|  | Spiral Staircase - going up & down |  | Latrine         |
|  | Portcullis                         |  | Machicolation   |
|  | Ladder - going up                  |  | Chimneys        |

**Machicolations:** Similar to hoardings (above) but were made of stone rather than timber. They could usually be accessed from behind the wall.

**Meurtriere:** Also called a “murder hole”. It is an opening in the floor where rocks, hot oil, and other missiles can be dropped onto attackers.

**Mezzanine:** A floor or landing between 2 main storeys.

**Motte:** A mound of earth upon which the keep of a castle was built. It could be natural or man-made.

**Mural Stair:** Stairs built into the thickness of a castle wall.

**Palisade:** From the Latin, *palus*, (“stake” or “post”). A defensive fence of wooden stakes or logs set vertically into the ground.

**Parapet:** A low wall running around the edge of a roof or terrace. It is often *crenellated* (see *Battlements*, above).

**Portcullis:** A heavy timber or metal grill that protects a doorway. It dropped between grooves in the walls.

**Rampart(s):** A wall or embankment made of stone, brick, or earth, surrounding a town or castle.

**Stair Tower:** A tower containing only a staircase, giving access to the rest of the castle.

**Vault:** Curved stone roofing.

**Wall Walk:** A passage along a castle wall.

# Beldorney Castle

Beldorney Castle was erected in the 1550s about 10 km west of Huntly above the Deveron River in Scotland. The original owners were the Wardhouse Gordons, the first of whom was George, son of Adam Dean of Caithness.

The castle was extended and renovated several times in the 17th and 18th centuries but only the original 16th C building is described here, though some parts of the upper floors are reconstructed from guesswork as the original walls were obliterated during later renovation work.

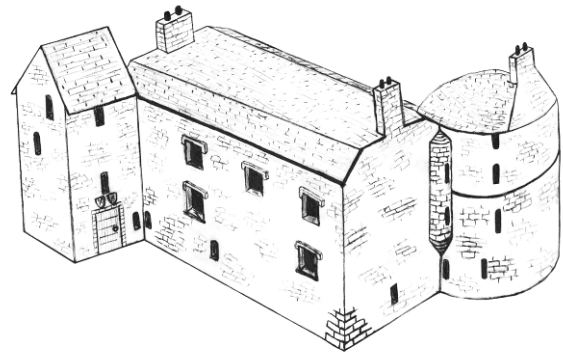
Beldorney is called a “Z-plan” tower house because its footprint resembles the letter Z. The stone castle consisted of a main block measuring on the outside about 13 m x 7.6 m at the base. The S wall is the thickest at 1.7 m, but the W wall is only 1 m thick. Attached to the SE corner was a round tower measuring approximately 6.4 m in diameter. A smaller square tower with walls about 3.6 m long was joined to the NW corner and contained the entrance (an iron-bound wooden door) and the main staircase up to the 1st floor, but no further. To ascend any higher one had to cross the Great Hall to the S stairs.

Above the entrance, the coats of arms of the original custodians of Beldorney, George Gordon and Janet Rose, could be seen. There were 2 loops covering the entrance on the N and W walls. Once inside (1), a vaulted passage to the E led to the kitchen (2), and the passage continued S through to the vaulted cellars. The rectangular room (3) was used as a buttery and pantry, while the circular room (4) was used for storage. In the kitchen on the N wall was a great fireplace.

A staircase in the 1st cellar led up to the S end of the Great Hall and the adjoining circular chamber on the 1st floor. A wooden screen partitioned the Great Hall (6) from the N entry passage (5). In the N and S walls of the Great Hall were 2 large fireplaces and a smaller fireplace was in the SE wall of the circular chamber (7). This chamber was used as a solar for the women of the household. The N half of the ceiling in the Great Hall had been lowered to accommodate a secret room - accessed through a trap door (10) in the floor above (see *Gordon's Secret*).

The spiral stairs continued up to the 2nd floor, which contained living quarters (9), a study or “closet” for the lord (8), and the chapel (11). There was a fireplace in both the N and S walls.

The 2nd floor of the square tower can only be accessed from the living quarters. Renovations in the square tower have destroyed most of the 3rd floor so



there is no way to tell where the entrance to this level was located. It is assumed here that a spiral staircase led up from the 2nd floor to the armoury on the 3rd floor (12).

The S staircase finished on the 3rd floor near the observatory at the top of the circular tower (13). The main building had no 3rd floor. The roof was an open construction with no ceiling, so it was visible from the 2nd floor.

## Gordon's Secret

On the 3rd level towards the NE part of the living quarters was a concealed trap door leading to a secret room between the 2nd and 3rd levels. John Gordon (9th of Beldorney), an ardent Jacobite, hid there after fleeing from the battle of Culloden in 1746. Lady Margaret allowed the pursuing soldiers to enter and search. She placed her chair directly over the trap door and played the harpsichord while they looked in vain for her husband. Gordon remained a fugitive for the rest of his life and it is likely that he sporadically used the hidden room to evade authorities in the years before his death in 1760.

## Beldorney Key

No. of Occupants: 12 - 24      WS: 500 - 850

### Level 1 (ground floor)

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Entrance       | 2. Kitchen        |
| 3. Buttery/Pantry | 4. Storage Cellar |

### Level 2 (first floor)

- |                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 5. Screens Passage | 6. Great Hall |
| 7. Solar           |               |

### Level 3 (second floor)

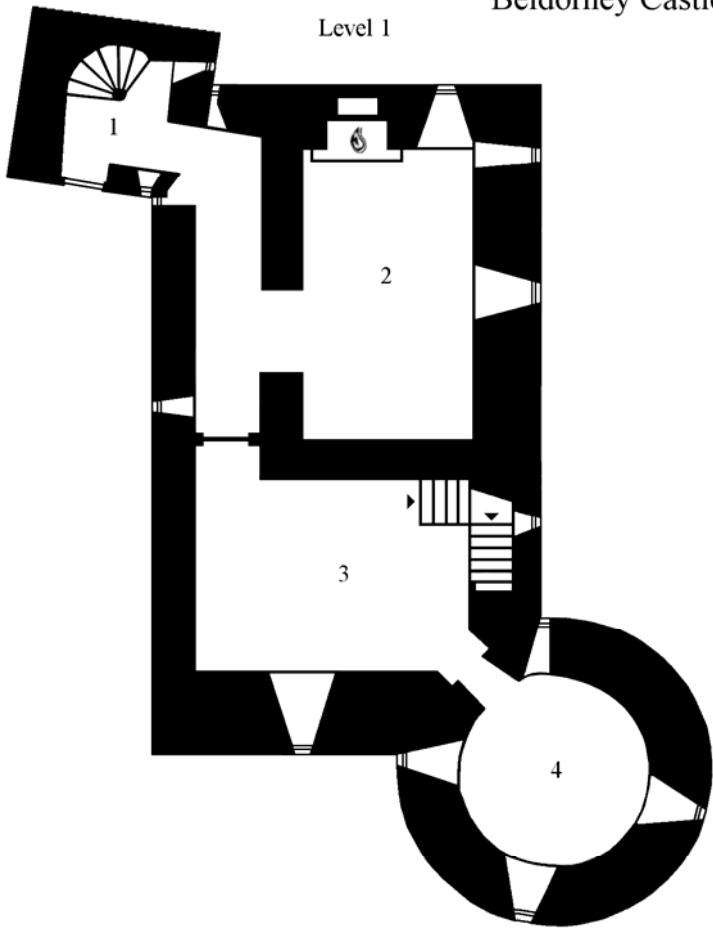
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| 8. Closet               | 9. Living Quarters |
| 10. Concealed Trap Door | 11. Chapel         |

### Level 4 (third floor)

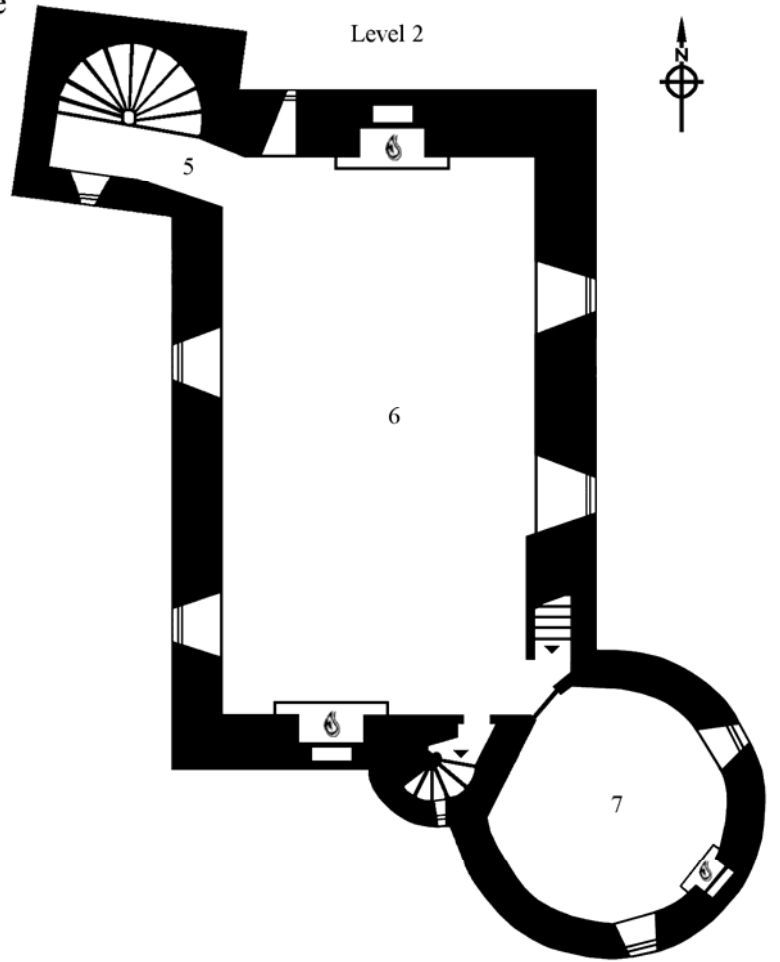
- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 12. Armoury | 13. Observatory |
|-------------|-----------------|

# Beldorney Castle

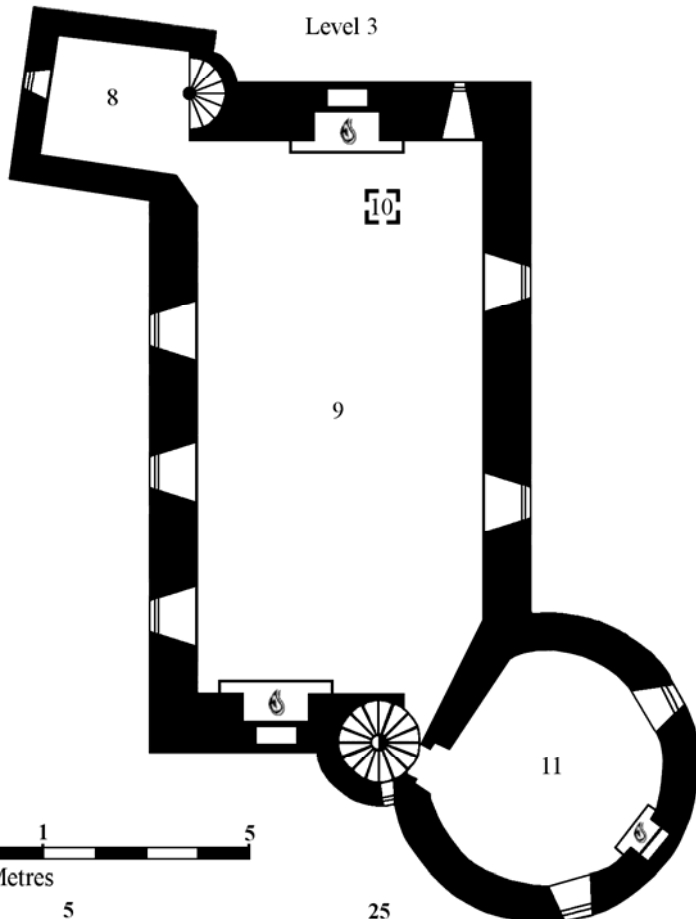
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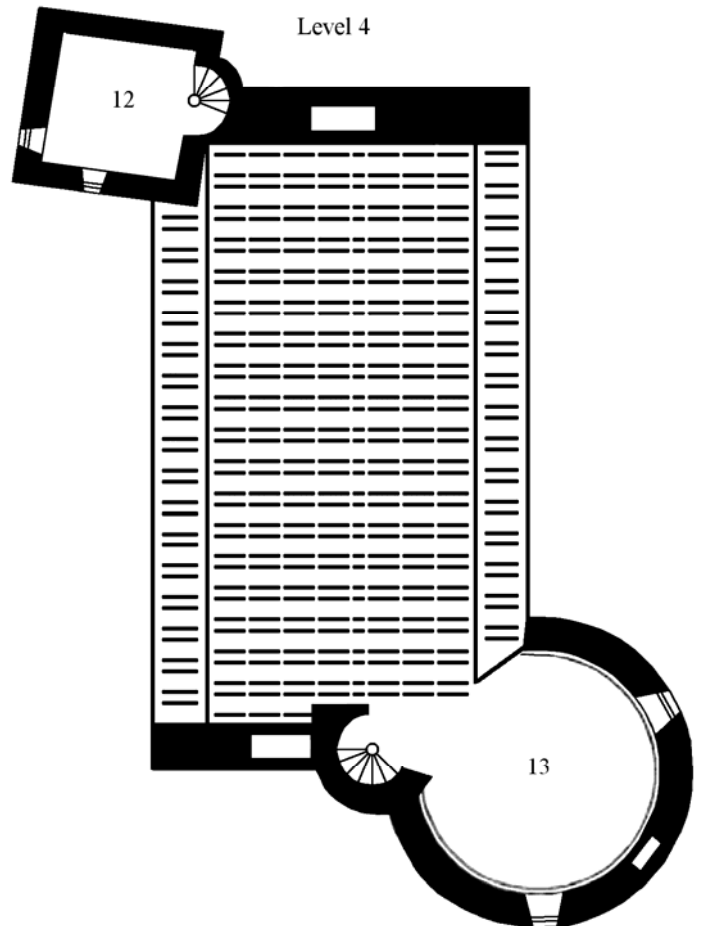
Level 2



Level 3



Level 4



Metres

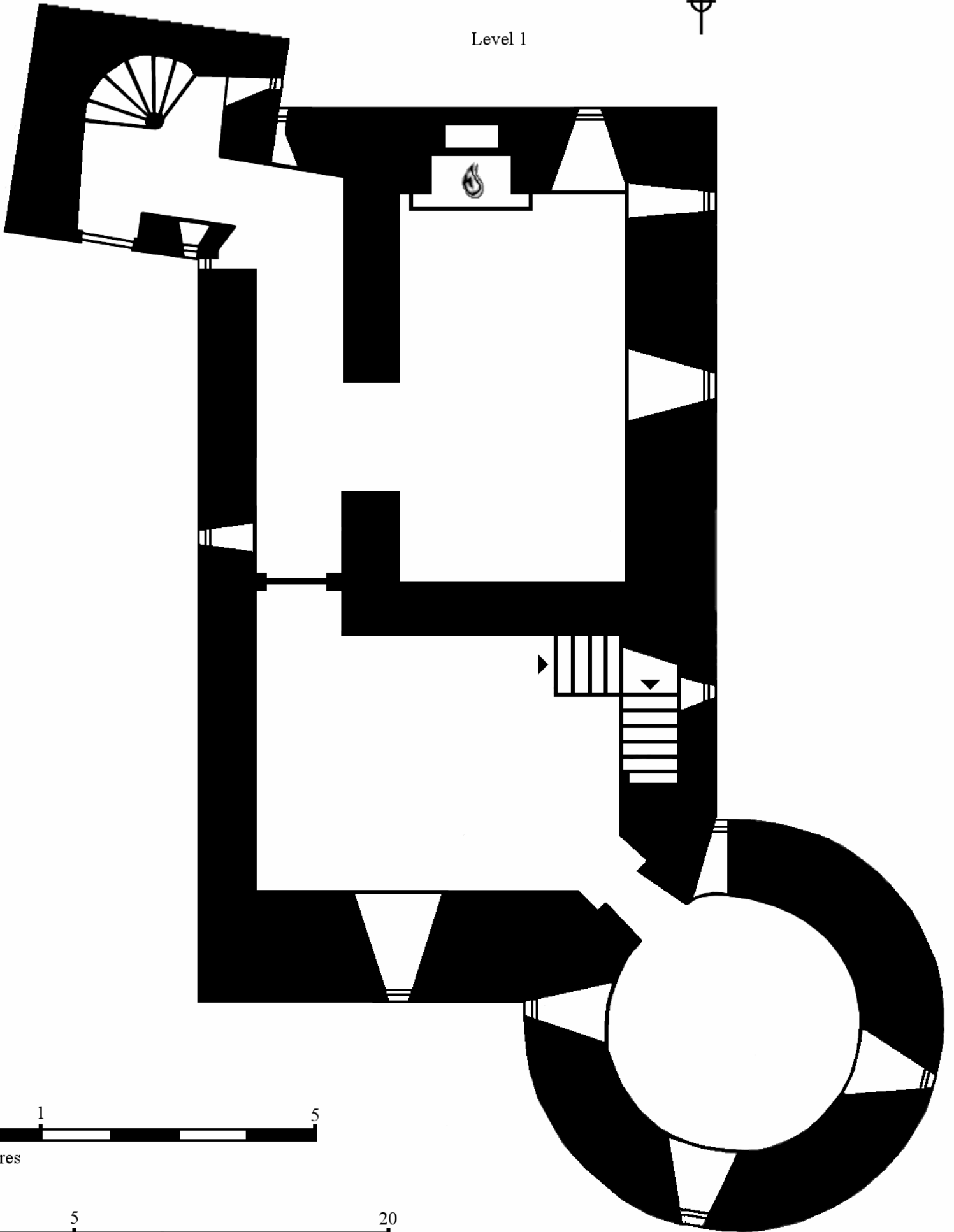


Feet

# Beldorney Castle



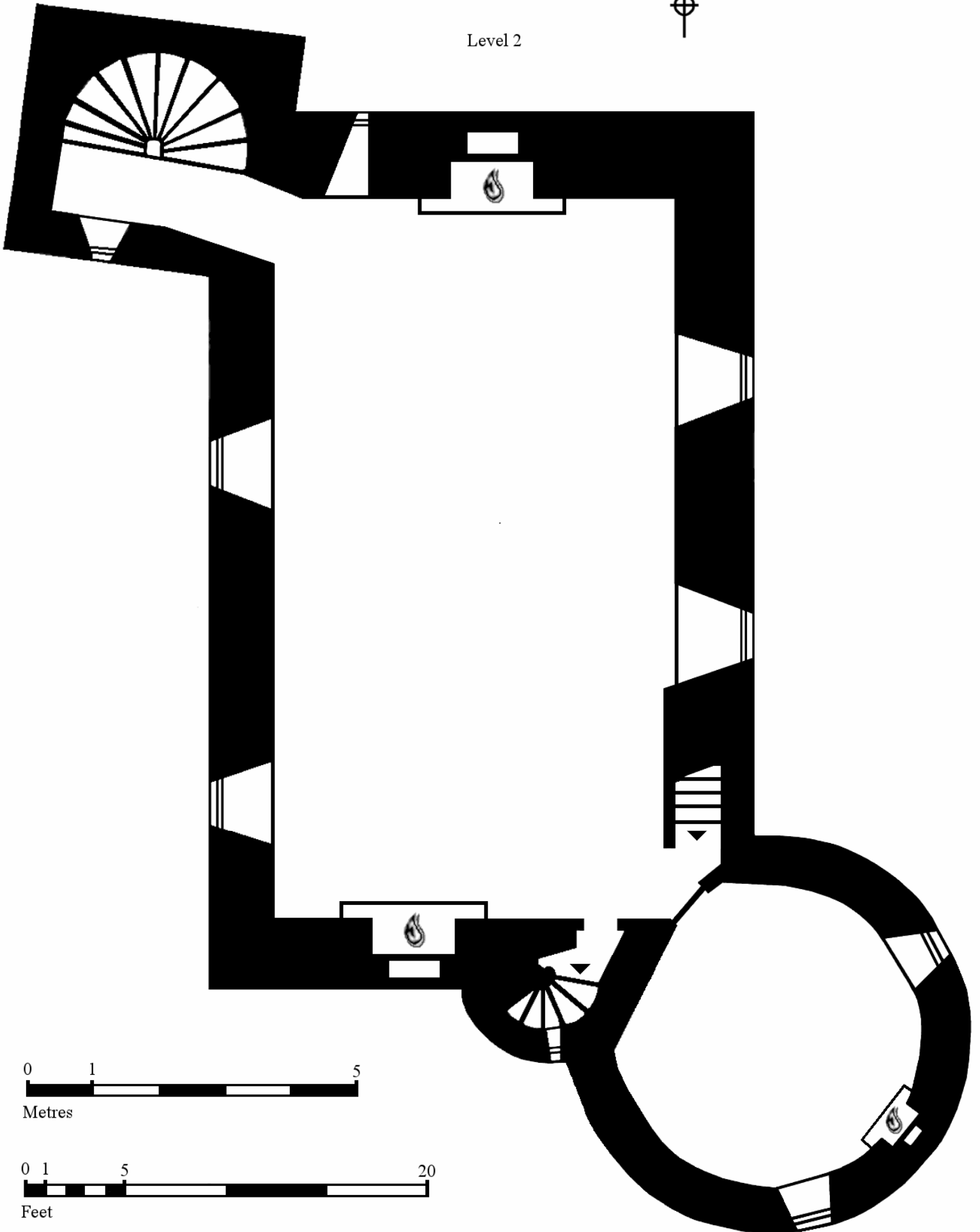
Level 1





# Beldorney Castle

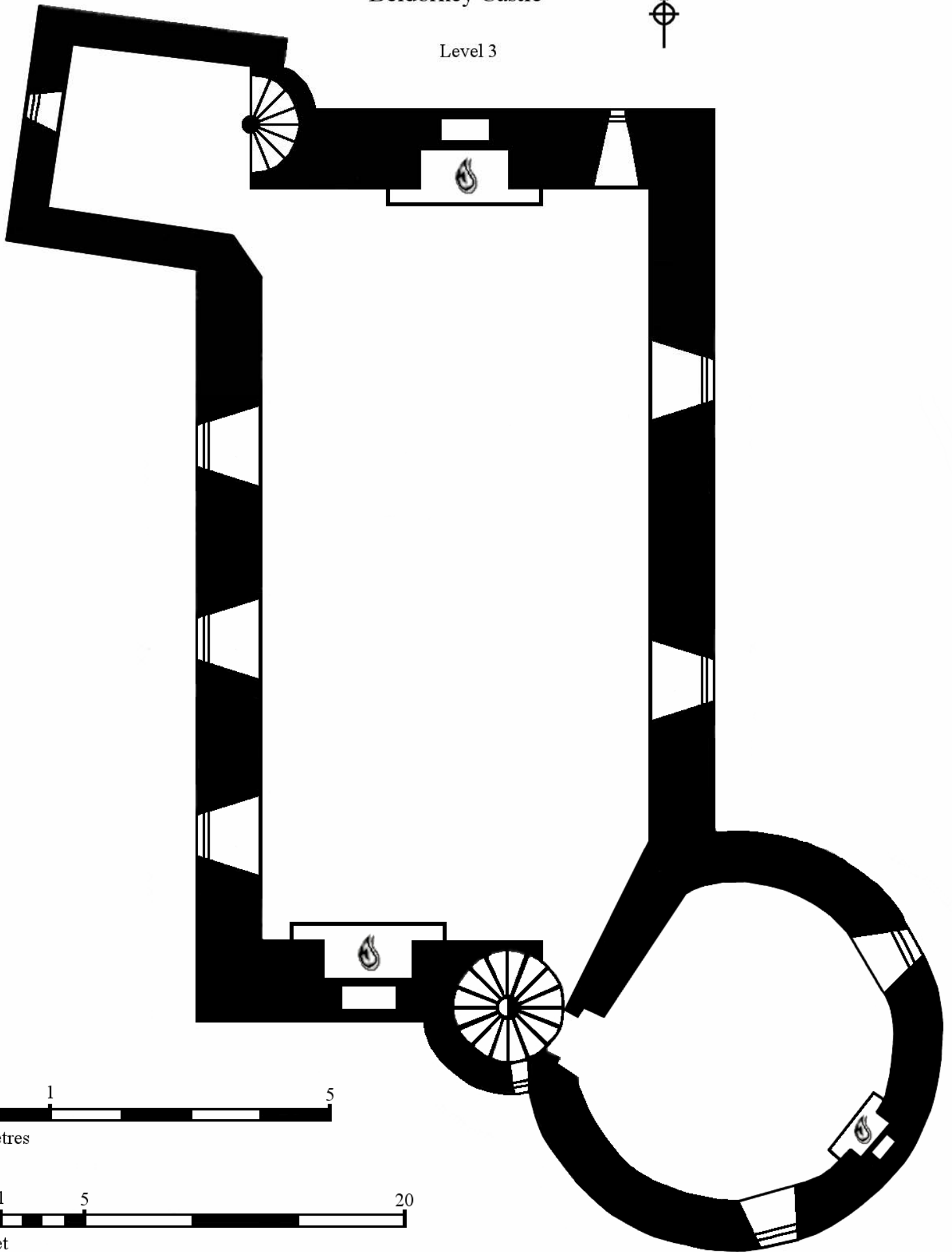
Level 2



# Beldorney Castle



Level 3



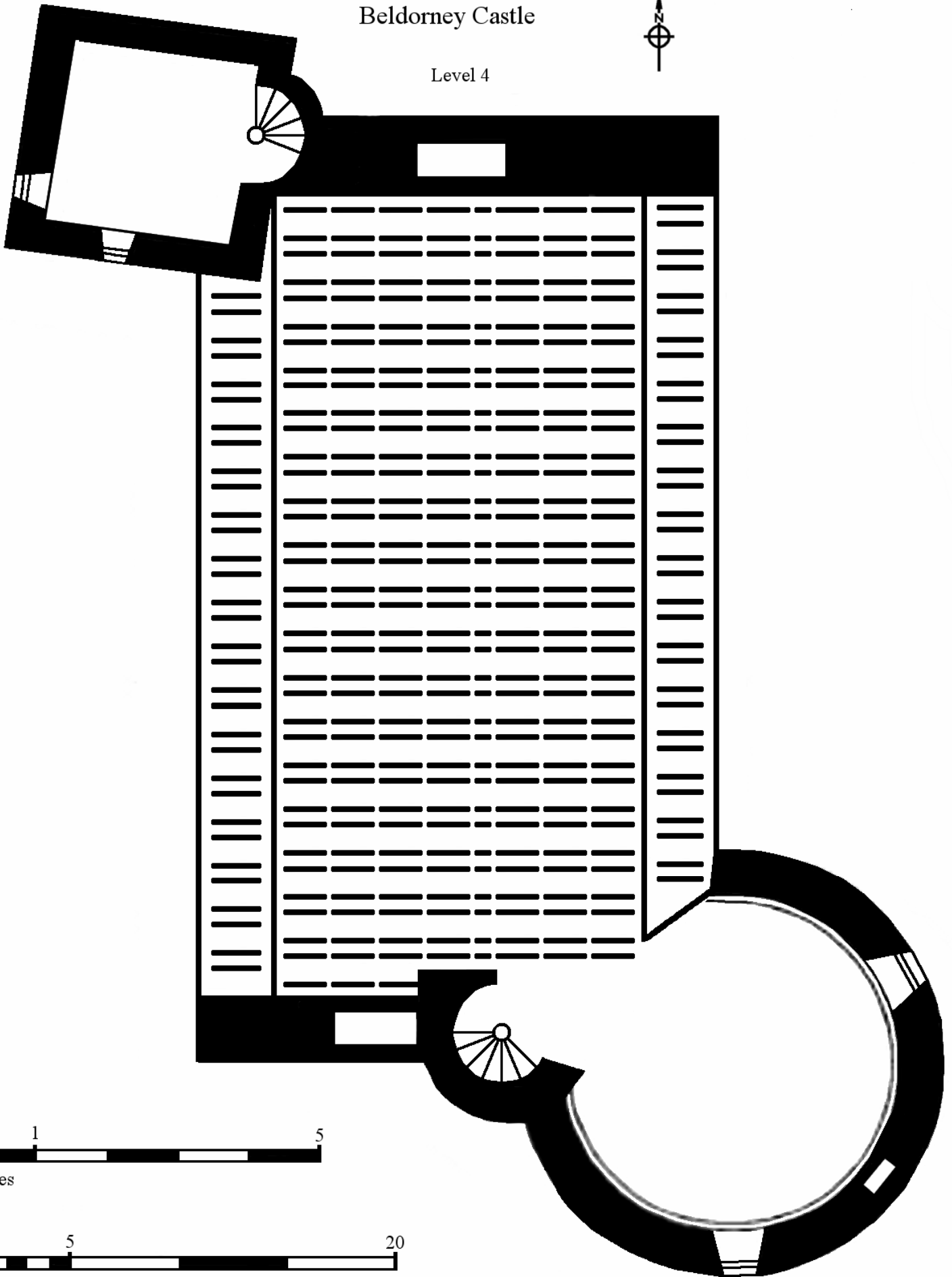
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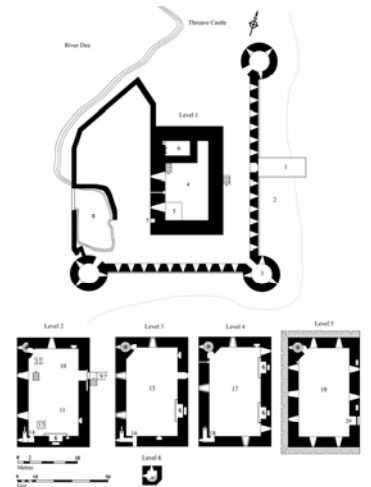
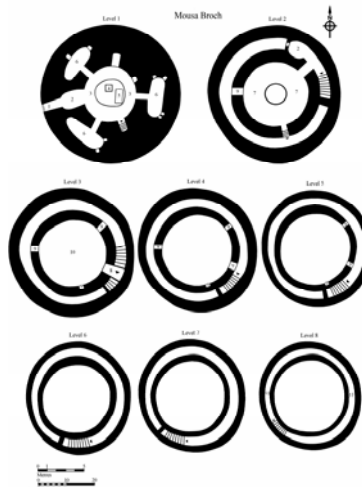
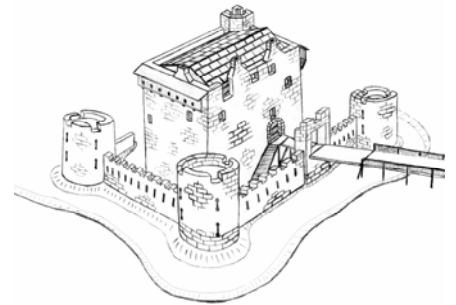
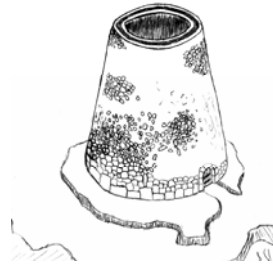
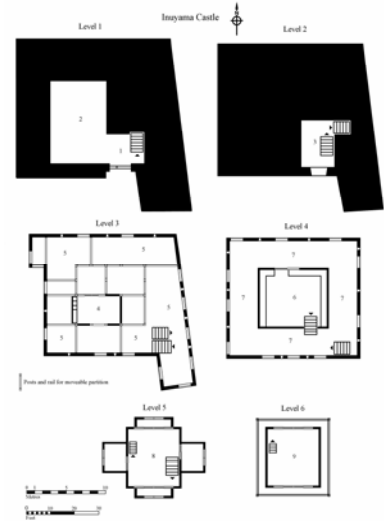
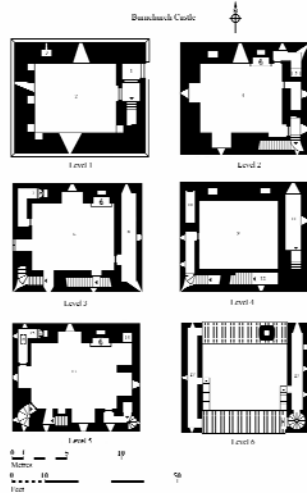
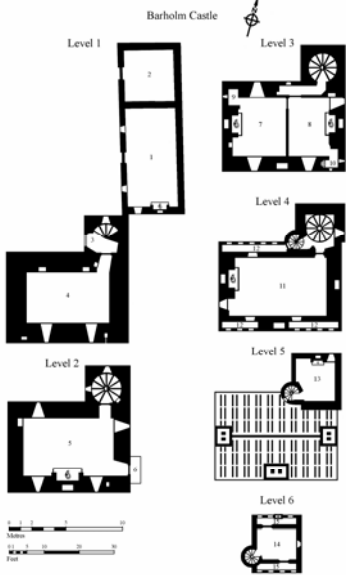
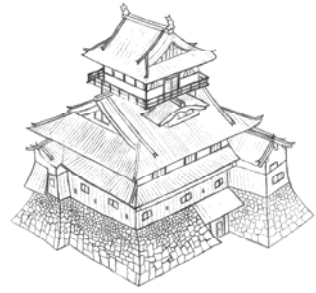
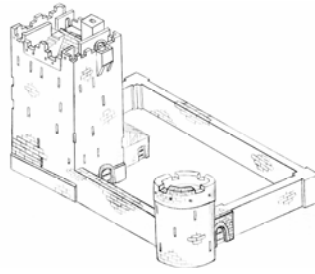
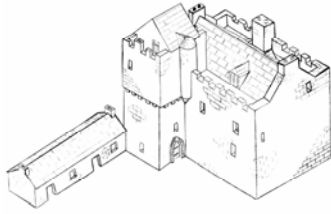
Feet

# Beldorney Castle

Level 4



# Other Castles in this Book



# More Castles...

