



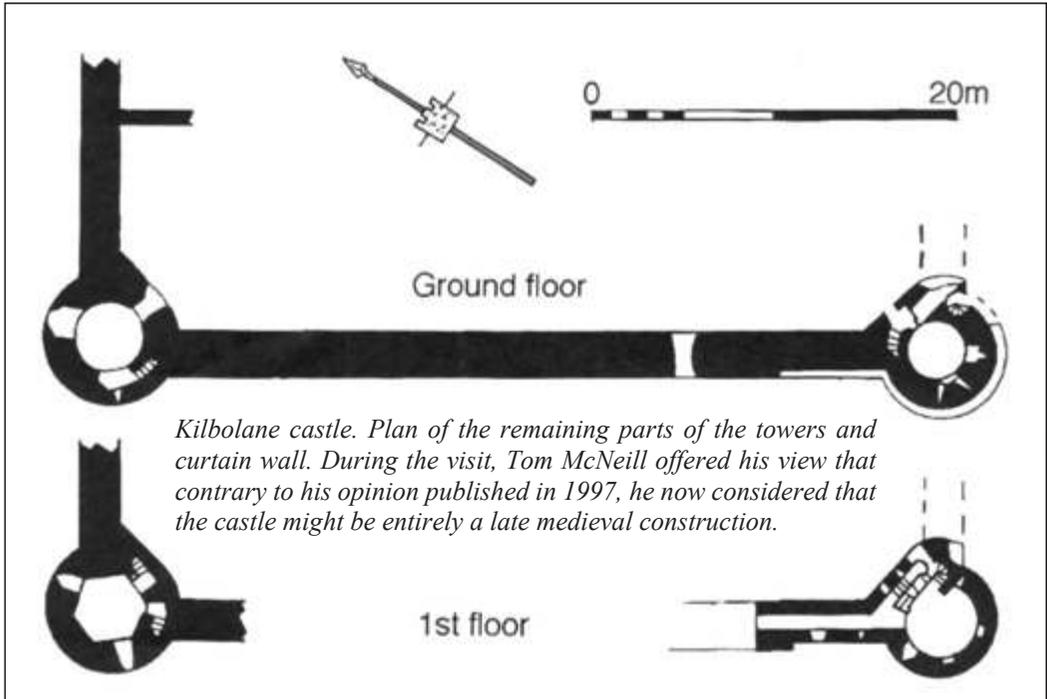
*Kilbolane castle. View of the remaining curtain wall and ditch, from the north west. North tower (left) and South Tower (right).*

### **Kilbolane Castle**

**Location:** Townland of Kilbolane, lr. Cill Bh-lain (the church of Blan or B|an's church).

**Description:** The remains of a keepless 13th-century castle stand at the west end of a low plateau that took the form originally of a square ward enclosed by a curtain with a circular tower at each corner. Now only the SW curtain wall, 38m long, the south and west towers, and a 29.8m length of the NW curtain wall stand. The curtain wall, 6m high by 1.8m thick, and towers are built of random rubble with a pronounced base batter. The SW curtain has a moat 9m wide by about 1.1m deep immediately outside for most of its length. The NW curtain has an inserted door 16m from the west tower, probably inserted when Kilbolane House was built on this side of castle. The foundations of a 3m-long wall with the base of a doorway butts against the inside face of the curtain wall 7.3m SW of the doorway. The NE curtain is entirely missing but part of the moat survives on this side.

**West Tower:** The west tower is entered at ground-floor level from within the ward through a doorway on the east side. There is a round masonry arch over the door but much of the surround has fallen away. The circular ground-floor chamber has a diameter of 4m and is roofed by a flattened dome. It is lit by windows to north and SW, both embrasures roofed by flat segmental vaults and with slit lights. A door in the south side of the SW window leads to a curving mural stair that rises to a lintelled door giving access to a hexagonal first-floor chamber roofed by a high pointed dome with wicker centring. The junction of wall-top and vault is crudely built, suggesting the vault may be inserted. The first floor is lit by windows in the NW and SW sides, both embrasures splayed and roofed by segmental vaults. The SW window has stone seats and single ogee-headed light. A partially collapsed door on the NE side leads to short mural chamber, measuring 1.7m by 0.6m, and probably



onto the wall-walk of the NW curtain but this area is now ruinous. Only the overgrown stump of the tower's second-floor level survives.

**South Tower:** The south tower is entered at ground-floor level from inside the ward through a doorway on the north side. The round-headed door is rebuilt, as are other features in the tower, probably when it was fitted out in the late 17th century as a residence. The doorway passage has a collapsed vaulted roof. A chamber overhead, measuring 2m by 1.4m and covered by segmental wicker-centred vault, probably had a murder hole in the floor. There is a blocked passage on the north side of doorway. A door with concrete arch leads into a circular ground-floor chamber with a 2.75m diameter, roofed by an unusual tent-shaped vault with wicker centring. The chamber is lit by windows to south and SW, their embrasures roofed by flat vaults with plank centring and with slit lights. There is also a gun loop on the south side of the SW window. At the junction of the tower with the SE curtain (only the stump of which survives) there is an inserted door with a rounded brick

arch at first-floor level. This gives access to a spiral stair, leading down to blocking at ground-floor level and up to the first-floor chamber of the tower. The stair may originally have been accessed from the ground-floor doorway into the tower. The circular first-floor chamber has a diameter of 4m and is roofed by a high pointed domed vault with wicker centring. It is lit by windows to NW and south, the south embrasure having stone seats but missing its light. The NW embrasure has a single ogee-headed light. A pointed-arch door, its south jamb missing, leads north from the tower chamber into a mural passage in the SW curtain wall. The passage, roofed by a wicker-centred vault, extends 10m to where a drawbar socket and a hanging eye for a door survive, but the curtain wall does not survive at this height beyond the door. The door may simply have led onto the wall-walk. At the s end of the passage, on the east side, a narrow stairway rises about 3m before continuing as a spiral stair to second-floor level. Here, a mural passage in the SW curtain wall, covered by wick-



*Kilbolane. North Tower showing the flanking loops along the north-south curtain wall.*

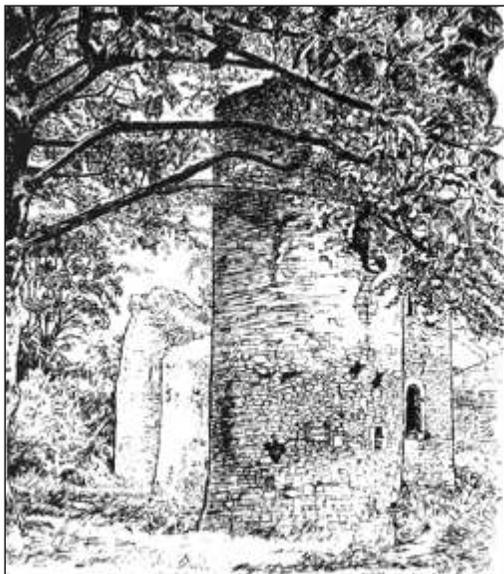
er-centred vault, leads to a garderobe. The spiral stair appears to have continued up to second-floor level, but this area has now collapsed.

**Summary History:** Kilbolane castle was probably built in the late 13th century by Maurice de Rocheford. It was acquired in the late 14th century by Thomas mac Shane Fitz-Gibbon, whose descendants held it until 1587 when it was granted to Hugh Cuffe. It was subsequently regained by a Gibbon heiress, Helena, and her husband William Power of Co. Waterford, whose descendants held Kilbolane until the mid-17th century. The castle was demolished in 1695 to provide stone for nearby Kilbolane Castle country house, now demolished.



*Above: The South Tower from the SW. Below: The tent-like vault with wicker centring of the the first floor.*





*The South tower looking toward the north.  
From James N Healy, p. 340.*



*Kilbolane. Above: Internal view of the spiral  
stair in the South Tower. Below: North Tower  
and section of the curtain wall that extends  
to the NE.*



*Kilbolane castle. The South Tower from the SE.  
Courtesy of Mike Searle, CC BY-SA 2.0,  
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