

# Castle Peris

Located near the northern tip of Selenos, roughly 6 miles (10 kilometres) off the southern mainland coast of Statrippe in Artemisia, separated from it by the commonly fog-shrouded Singing Channel, this is the name given to the former settlement and castle here. There are three main parts to the ruins, detailed in order below, the Harbour, the Village and the Castle itself. See also the notes with the separate Selenos map for details on the goddess, The Twisted Torchbearer, who is often present somewhere on the isle, if quite rarely in the Castle's vicinity, and the ubiquitous Moon Birds, whose Bird-of-Paradise-like songs fill the air here by day and night.

Ideas for the notes regarding the Castle Peris area were generated using cards and procedures in the Loremaster's Deck and Loremastery Expansion decks produced by The Story Engine. Some of the personal names were randomly determined from tables in Vol. 1 of North Wind Adventures' Hyperborea RPG.

## Peris Harbour

Technically, there is no longer a true harbour here, as it was seemingly washed-away long ago, leaving only a narrow, shoreline beach of sand and shingle, with some low cliffs on its inland edge. There are still ruined buildings along the shore and under the water (not shown on the map, these lie offshore to the northwest of the extant landward ruins). Undersea topography creates a cyclical, strong, tidal race along much of the Harbour stretch of shore during spring tides especially, which makes navigating these inshore waters then especially dangerous. The onshore waterfront was once paved with cobbles, some of which can be found lying loose along the strand, while a few more intact segments still survive in places among the landward ruins. Much has long-since collapsed into the sea, however.

The level and manner of the destruction among the buildings of the Harbour area, extending over the northwestern half of the Castle proper, could suggest some tremendous storm, or storm surge of the sea, once swept across this area, while apparently leaving the Village area largely untouched. Most of the Harbour buildings have only lower stretches of surviving wall, some of which have been pushed out of alignment while still standing. There is an impression that even when new-built, many of the wall-lines were probably never altogether true, something that can be noted across both Village and Castle as well. The Harbour architectural decoration shows definite signs of having been inspired by sea crabs, as these remain visible in many places over the stonework. The fully onshore ruins are infested with fungus, notably in Buildings 9 & 11. When entering or searching through any of the Harbour ruins, spores can be released in sufficient quantity to cause breathing difficulties and fungal infections.

**Building 1:** The southernmost Harbour property was once a shell-carver's home and workshop, as some carved pieces of shell scattered among the ruins indicate. Their nature suggests a possible religious significance to some of the pieces. All the fragments came from creatures that are still to be found locally on the coast nearby, primarily several types of cone shell. The surviving work is of very fine quality. An old yard or former paved open area surrounds the building, with traces of nearly-lost paths running southeast towards the Village and northeast along the back of the other Harbour ruins from it.

**Building 2:** An empty shell, beyond the ubiquitous fungus.

**Building 3:** A two-, or possibly three-roomed structure, perhaps once a ship's chandler, as there are some links of waxy chain, of the kind used on ship's steering, half-buried among the internal rubble, along with a few short lengths of tarred, sturdy, ship's rope. The chains have musical properties when struck in air, a seemingly accidental by-product of their manufacture.

**Building 4:** One of the larger properties along the shoreline, this may have once been a boat-builder's home or workshop, as a few old, shabby, shaped planks are lying under part of the collapsed walls and roof. The nearby shore-edge low cliff has an overhang, beneath which, sheltered from the sea, is a similarly shabby old small boat, a former fishing vessel, which is still seaworthy. Spotted shellfish are to be found in profusion around the boat and along the shore below the overhang. While edible, they are also associated with the Spirit of the Waters (possibly a Siren) hereabouts, which meant they were once considered forbidden to eat, something certain old tales from the mainland may yet recall.

**Building 5:** A substantial area of cobbled ground extends between Buildings 4 and 5 next to the top of the low shore-edge cliffs. Although this is another double-roomed structure, it appears empty of anything now beyond fungus and rubble.

**Building 6:** More cobblestones run between this old structure and Building 7 atop the crumbling edge of the low cliffs nearby, parts of which cliff-falls have buried the inland parts of the shoreline ruins on the beach below. The local mix of shoreline rubble and cliff-debris has created the perfect conditions to whip-up the sea nearby into foam in profusion at high tide. This is very lightweight and floats readily inland in spongy masses for some distance, sticking to skin and clothing very readily until washed-off.

**Building 7:** One of the rare ruins with some higher walls, towards its northeastern corner, in which corner inside are a couple of intact barrels of Sailor's Oil, a translucent oil that floats on water, and which is used to attract seals. Sailors consider it to bring good luck, though if accidentally drunk, it has negative memory-affecting properties for humanoids.

**Building 8:** A small and particularly battered ruin, whose rubble hides an ornate hand-hook of very resistant metal, crafted using, and to look like, a scorpion's sting, and which has a magical scrying ability for those wearing it to replace a missing hand. The hook though is also connected to a White Elemental, a glowing, multi-limbed elemental creature that looks cute, but is quite deadly, and feeds upon undead spirits. The tales about such things sometimes call them Wight Elementals as a result.

**Building 9:** Largest of the ruined shoreline properties, this has an especially bad fungal infection throughout its remains and rubble. It is otherwise empty.

**Building 10:** A very badly damaged ruin, with much scattered rubble all around it. Beyond the usual fungus and debris, it is the adopted home of "Feathers", a silky, feline Phase Cat, able to teleport over short distances within sight at will. It radiates a charm field, such that those in its near-vicinity become friendly towards it. Buried among the remains, and possibly the reason Feathers is attracted to the ruin, is a majestic golden bowl, the Silvert Chalice, a legendary object believed lost or destroyed in a storm at sea long ago, and which can be used to shape magic. It is said to have been created by an Imp in ages past.

**Building 11:** Set on the lower northwestern side of Elder Hill, below the Castle, and inland of the other surviving Harbour structures, this large property has become badly infected by fungus. It is otherwise empty.

**Structure 12, Shoreline Ruins:** An extensive scatter of former buildings and rubble fallen onto the beach from the old low cliffs, parts of which have been washed-away entirely over time. These now form rockpools at low tide, home to a large colony of Frilled Cuttlefish, creatures that are exclusive to the inshore waters of this isle. They communicate by song underwater, and are very hard to kill, as they have multiple hearts.

## Peris Village

What seems to have once been a quite substantial village lies south of the Harbour properties and the Castle, on the lower land southwest of Elder Hill. It consists of a mixture of structures both intact and scarcely built. However, the intact ones are in need of repair, as while most have roofs and exterior doors, they are often in a dilapidated state, with missing tiles and rotten planks in places. Those barely built are little more than stone foundations over now-grassed interior floors, and include the entire block that property H is in. None are complete ruins, although the building at the eastern end of the property K block has partly collapsed through wear. For clarity on the map, buildings with grass floors are those scarcely-built ones. Those with a variety of coloured stonework or dirt floors are still mostly intact. None has an upper storey, although some have simple lofts beneath their roofs, albeit without any ladders or stairs to access them. Debris and dust is apparent in the more intact places, sometimes with scraps of furnishings or other discarded materials, long abandoned. The barely-started structures commonly have vegetation growing in and over them, which can make their wall-lines hard to determine from a distance. Traces of several tracks or old roadways connect the various parts of the Village, and three also continue away from it. One trail leads northwest towards Building 1 in the Harbour, another northeast to Gate Tower GT2 at the Castle, and the third south off the southern map's edge. These are little more than dirt trails that are hard to define in parts.

**Unbuilt Structure A:** Lost among the vegetation here is an old artefact, the Battle Clasp, a braided metal clasp with magically transformative powers that greatly enhance the standing and charisma of its wearer. It is linked in legend to a prophesied war. Next to it among the long grass is another famed object, the Necklace of Healers. This is reputed to be indestructible, and is an iconic heirloom of The Silver King, Kleomenes, its

creator. Tales hold that it was a contributory factor in the Victory of the Mystical Frost in aeons past. Both objects are widely believed to be mythical.

**House B:** The roof of this narrow building has a number of missing tiles, and has been adopted as a roost by Crested Dragonflies, large, almost transparent, hunting insects that prey on smaller birds. When they die, they crystallize into valuable, gem-quality smoky quartz versions of themselves. Several of these gem-Dragonflies can be found still complete inside the building, along with fragments of many more, plus their still-living descendants.

**Unbuilt Structure C:** The vegetation here is home to a group of Thunderous Salamanders, leaf-eating, lizard-like creatures with disproportionately huge tails that have a club-like end. They use this to drum on objects to identify their territory, for all it gives them a strange asymmetry. They originated in another dimension.

**Unbuilt Structure D:** More Thunderous Salamanders can be found in the overgrowth here (see Structure C). In one of their nests is a small, shiny, glowing, jeweller's chisel, used for working crystals. It has the magical ability to carve gem-crystals into forms able to trap souls.

**House E:** Hidden among some debris in a corner of this narrow building is a dented sickle, with symbols engraved on its blade indicating it belongs to a little-known, possibly legendary, group, The Winter Cult, followers of the Vulture God, and used in their rituals. Those familiar enough with obscure tales may recall its primary use was to cut the fruit of the Sulphur Fungus, unusually large, poisonous fungi, and that the sickle was designed to emit a musical note when it cut a suitably ripe fungus stem. The tales also relate that such sickles were always created and used in pairs, although there is no sign of another here, and this one is damaged anyway.

**Unbuilt Structure F:** The overgrowth here and into the adjoining unbuilt structure is the lair of a small group of Crusty Lizards, brightly coloured creatures roughly half as long as an adult Human in their mature form. They have a bony carapace, and an especially thick skull plate. Their colouring is a warning, as they can be very vicious.

**House G:** A larger property with no surviving door, which is now the lair of a group of Puppet Spiders, patient arachnids that go by other names in different places. The markings on their exoskeletons change with their mood, and in many cultures, they are associated with nightmares. Parts of the walls inside this building have been decorated with a spotted pigment that has chemical properties which make it very difficult to remove, once applied. Those familiar enough may recall it is often used in dyeing textiles too. It has the magical power to induce dreams for those sleeping in places decorated with it, or when wearing clothes dyed in it.

**Unbuilt Structure H:** Unusually for a part-built structure in the Village, this one has already had what seems to be a blacksmith's hearth and furnace set into its northwest corner, which is filled with never-lit coking-coal. Buried underneath the lumps of coke is an unbreakable marble anvil which has celestially magical properties. Experts in old myths may realize it could be the rumoured anvil of a since-forgotten college of priests of a deity known only as The Peacemaker.

**House I:** A building with two intact external doors. Growing inside through the dirt floor, and oddly in the dark, are some Veined Bean plants. These produce prolific quantities of large, highly nutritious beans, that have a distinctive marbled appearance. Legendarily, they were said to have solved the Corrupted Harvest disaster.

**House J:** In amongst the dust and debris in this stone-floored property are a few small pieces of the multicoloured Lightning Alloy, used in decorating certain important buildings on the mainland in older times. A fortune's-worth was once lost during a battle, so this is quite a valuable material. Despite the solid floor, some brittle roots are growing up through spaces between its flagstones, Melting Roots, magical plants that have size-affecting properties. Ice and cold will kill them, but they continually regrow if cut or broken-off. The root must be used or preserved somehow within a day of harvesting to be effective.

**House K:** The roof of this building is in quite poor repair, and in the loft, as well as the ground nearby outside it, grow quantities of Plague Orchids. These have feathery, ridged flowers with iridescent petal-edges that seem to glow and change colour. They are connected to the legendary Strand Epidemic, hence their name, for all they played no part in that event.

# The Castle

Set on Elder Hill, the northwestern half of the Castle is heavily rubble-filled from various collapsed structures within it, including parts of its outer walls. Much of the southeastern half remains intact, including to roofs and doors. Vegetation has encroached in places, although there are clearer, narrow pathways through the grass to most of the more intact doorways within the walls. The remains of a couple of old roadways run from the main Gate Tower (GT2) towards Towers T3 and T7 to the north, and Courtyard area C2 to the west as well, the former ending in what was once a larger, paved, open area. The surviving full-height walls and towers have crenelations along their outer sides, and all the more intact towers remain higher than the walls in their upper sections. Only the ground level plans for the more complete places are mapped. Spiral stairs connect to the upper levels in the three Gate Towers and Tower T5, as well as the parts of the intact walls linked to them. The upper levels of Tower T8 can be accessed by a series of ladders and trapdoors as well as from inside the walls. Building B4 has no upper storey, merely a loft with a trapdoor access, although there is no ladder there.

Although he may be found elsewhere in the settlement at times, or indeed elsewhere on the island, the Castle is the main home for the isle's sole permanent humanoid inhabitant, a self-exiled, hermit-like Human, the former chief sage **Hypatos**. He successfully predicted a major eclipse and planetary alignment in the past, but being imaginative and forgetful, he then failed to warn of an abdication crisis he believed these celestial events portended, somewhere on the mainland (he is quite vague as to when and where all this took place). He still wishes to right the wrongs he thinks followed that crisis. He is convinced there is something on the isle that will help him resolve those perceived wrongs, although he does not know what. He has some minor magical talents, and carries a magical, lightweight, shoulder-slung bag with him at all times. This contains a small, special library of important divinatory and astronomical/astrological works, and which bag also provides him with simple, fresh food, drink and clothing when he requires. It will not open for anyone else. He has also become (or perhaps always was) the sole priest, of sorts, for The Twisted Torchbearer, and is apparently under her protection. He is very knowledgeable about the isle, and seems to have been here for a very long time, although his appearance suggests no great age, merely late middle-age. Commonly found somewhere in Towers T5, GT1, GT2 or GT3 when he is here.

**Ruined Tower T1:** Westernmost of the outer wall towers, its upper parts have collapsed completely, leaving only the rubble-filled lowest part still standing. However, much of the outer western wall has slipped downslope, and is no longer connected to the rest. This curved wall-segment stands very precariously amidst its own rubble on the hillside, and seems most unsafe. Scattered over and among the rubble in the more stable part of the Tower are numerous delicate Moon Feathers. Said to be of mythical origin, they are supposedly imbued with the light and magical power of the White Moon, waxing and waning as it does. Said to have been gifted as romantic gestures in some old tales.

**Large Ruined Tower T2:** Westernmost of the interior towers, this has largely collapsed into rubble, with its surviving wall-segments, and much of the rubble inside it, covered in dramatic-looking Briar Moss, hanging in great skeins from the upstanding masonry. It has very sharp barbs that will snag on hair, fur and fabrics, pulling on which releases clouds of spores.

**Low Building Ruins B1:** Buildings that once connected to the walls of internal Towers T2, T3, T4 and the Tower linked to Building B2, adjoining the south wall of T3, which have now fallen into rubble piles with a few fragments of standing wall. In the largest former room/structure (where the label is) are the flaking remnants of an old booby trap, which is liable to cause further collapse of the ruins here if accidentally tripped. It was meant to defend against enemies originally. The rubble all around here is incredibly filthy, with much very fine dust that will coat skin and clothing, and be difficult to completely clean away later.

**Large, Partly-Ruined Tower T3:** One of the taller ruined towers, most of its internal above-ground-level floors have fallen-in, for all much of its outer wall survives. The interior has an eerie-looking frilled algae growing everywhere, which has a surface like grain. It could be mistaken for piles of grain in places, were it not that it also hangs vertically in sheets attached to the walls. Its appearance changes with the seasons, only seeming like ripened grain in harvest-time.

**Ruined Tower T4:** Scarcely recognisable as a Tower at all, as it is in such a ruinous state, surrounded and partly buried by other collapsed stonework, including from the Castle's outer wall nearby. A number of petrified small shrubs are scattered across its remains, none of which, were they still-living plants, would be native to this part of Nibirum at all. From their forms, they had clearly grown over and into the ruins before turning, or being turned, to stone. It is not easy to tell them from the ruined stonework at first glance.

**Building Ruins B2:** While difficult to separate these structures from Ruined Buildings B1 and B3, the walls here do stand a little higher than those of B1, and there is somewhat less rubble here too. In the more relatively intact, larger, room is a partly rubble-hidden trapdoor down to **Crabwell Delve**, detailed by a separate Atlas map. In this same old room are a number of rolls of shiny, polished, unused, Cliff Paper, a material believed wholly legendary, said to have been what the mythical Palace of New Beginnings was built from. The Paper is further said to have been created in a place called Falcon Dell, an irregularly-shaped, metal-walled valley, from which extensive subterranean mines extended. In the adjoining room to the east, partly beneath more rubble, is an intact, roughly foot-long (30 centimetres) painted rod. It can be magically extended to become 10 feet long (3 metres), or back to its original length, as its owner chooses. It is said to have been crafted by a magus in the distant past using a method no one can now replicate, in response to a drought. When fully extended, and the appropriate ceremonies performed, it can magically cause enough rain to fall to end any drought. In the passageway connecting both these rooms, running up to the ruined tower at its east end, and as usual, hidden by the rubble, is a slippery gold finger ring, easily lost or dropped, a Ring of Abundance. When left overnight in contact with any metal object, it changes the metal to solid gold. Yet another mythical object, it has been claimed as seen in many places down the ages, for all the more recent versions all had it end up in a forgotten university store somewhere, though nobody knows where.

**Building Ruins B3:** A still-more intact group of building ruins between the interior towers, this area is home to a small group of heroically large Obsidian Beetles, whose bodies are shaped like a double-bladed axe, and which have a heavy, dense exoskeleton which is very hard to damage. They are the legendary guardians of the cryptic Shadow Temple of myth, a place full of forgotten things that only a skilled guide may try to find. Even when it is located, it can be entered only by someone using a Spiritual Cord (something that every culture to mention it has their own beliefs and version of). The Shadow Temple features in various storied prophecies, but what and where it is have been lost to the ages. It might be connected to The Twisted Torchbearer, or perhaps one of her forbears.

**Large Tower T5:** The only fully intact internal Tower at the Castle, it is heavily hung with delightful, fragrant herbs all over its outside, whose leaves when rubbed emit delicious, soothing, restful scents. These herbs and their scent is anathema to scorpions, which will not go near them.

**Partly Ruined Tower T6:** Most of the western wall of this Tower has collapsed, together with much of its upper floors on that side, for all part of the connected outer western wall of the Castle is still fairly intact. Parts of the upper tower can be accessed on what survives of their eastern floors from doorways out of the internal levels of the wall corridor west of the Gate Towers. There is no easy access to the Tower's upper levels from within it now. Another intact door leads into the interior wall corridor east towards the three hexagonal Gate Towers on the ground-level (as mapped), despite the rubble on the floor of this lower chamber. Beside the rubble, and separated from it by a cleared space, is a large block of Deep Glass. This Glass has reflective, transparent and magical properties. It is a substance discovered by accident long ago, or so the tales about it relate. Its magical powers help guide a sage who concentrates upon it in strange ways, sometimes shedding light beams, projecting brief images onto nearby walls or floors, showing glimpses of things within itself, and suchlike. Nearby is an empty, weatherproof chest of some unbreakable, unidentifiable substance, whose outer decoration was obviously inspired by the sea. Its form suggests it was intended to fit into a ship at some prior epoch. The semi-resident sage Hypatos uses it as a handy seat for viewing the Deep Glass. Perched atop the intact outer crenelations on the northeast-facing wall of the Tower, looking out across the Castle compound, is The Beguiler, an unconventional Gargoyle. Much of its time is spent immobile, like the typical stone statue form common to many living Gargoyles, while remaining perpetually watchful. It is though highly intelligent, and partly mechanical, able to transform its limbs into metal, stone, or a combination of both, weapons and tools, as it desires. It is able to speak many languages, and is a font of obscure knowledge.

**Western Outer Gate Tower GT1:** All three Gate Towers have a hexagonal plan, the two outer ones (GT1 & GT3) the smaller in area, but which both reach a further level above the larger GT2. All three link into the internal adjoining wall corridors at various levels, and the two smaller towers link into the larger similarly, but only above ground level. GT1 and GT3 each have a central spiral stair connecting to all their upper levels and their roofs. GT1 is made from a distinctly different stone throughout to either of the other two, or to any other part of the Castle and the surrounding buildings, a Blue Gulf Granite, from a location nobody seems to know. The Granite is indeed blue-coloured, although it is not certain if the place-name may have been the Blue Gulf, or simply the Gulf, for instance. Beyond its colouring, this rock has a textured surface skin that seems both part of the stone, yet somehow separate from it, as if slightly translucent.

**Central Gate Tower GT2:** GT1 has some general notes on all three Gate Towers. This is the larger in area, although it is a level less tall than either of the flanking Towers GT1 and GT3. It has an internal access spiral stairway only from the level above the ground one to its upper floors, which higher levels also link to the two adjoining Gate Towers and the internal outer wall corridors. In one of its upper chambers is a facemask made from bones and feathers of the isle's Moon Birds (see the notes for the Selenos map on these). It has a curiously crafty expression. Where it came from is unclear, but it has magical powers and will speak secrets and revelations if questioned, always using the speaker's own language. It hangs high up on the north wall.

**Eastern Outer Gate Tower GT3:** Much like Tower GT1 in form and size, while constructed from the usual stone elsewhere in the Castle, not the fancier rock of GT1. Hidden in a wall compartment of a chamber just below its roof is the Scarlet Fan, a sentient, fancy-looking hand-held fan, able to shoot small magical projectiles from its blades on command. It is powered by the trapped soul of a Siren.

**Courtyard Building Block B4:** Four individual properties are inside this single-level structure, which is remarkably intact and weatherproof. However, small, sheltered gaps in the roofing have allowed bees to get in and set up several extensive hives, producing fine-quality Mage Honey, a type of honey that conducts magical energy, giving enhanced perception for a time to those eating some. The Honey's nature is described only in one enigmatic poem, although Hypatos, who lives at the Castle, has discovered this, and sometimes uses small quantities of the Honey in his deliberations.

**Partly Ruined Tower T7:** The outer walls of the northeastern outer wall tower are almost completely intact, although the central parts of its two lower internal floors have largely collapsed into the ground level one. It is just still possible to navigate around on what remains of these upper floors to access the higher interior wall corridors to the west and south from here. The floor below its roof is intact, as is much of the roof itself. Hidden in one of the upper levels, among some rubble, is the multi-faceted crystalline Umbral Javelin, which temporarily traps the souls of those it kills. It becomes self-animated after killing someone. It was believed lost, or destroyed, in the mythical Heartless Siege That Never Was, which tales suggest was the great final gamble by a creature or person known only as The Disruptor, who blamed the events leading to the Siege on a similarly mysterious group, The Traditionalists. The event involved was associated with an insect-transmitted sickness that came after it, again according to the legends.

**Tower T8:** The only intact outer wall Tower, at the southeast corner, this has a series of ladders and trapdoors leading up its interior east wall to all its higher levels and its roof. Each level also has doorways into the internal outer wall corridors. On the first level chamber above the ground floor are two sealed boxes with geometric designs on, each containing a sparkling, brightly-coloured, ashy substance, said to contain the power of the sun. When combined with Sandbat Tree Resin, this ash makes a powerful explosive material. Sandbat Trees can be found in a few places in the denser jungle on this isle locally, and their Resin is a firm substance that oozes only very slowly from natural cracks in the bark. It has a notoriously unpleasant smell when exposed to sunlight. The upper parts of the tower are used as a roost by a small flock of Crypt Parrots, persistent, small birds with an annoyingly powerful screech, and three eyes each. They prey chiefly on bees, which may explain their relative proximity to Building B4.

**Courtyard Rubble Area C1:** Some of the densest, and higher, piles of rubble within the Castle's outer walls are to be found here, with vegetation growing over and up through them in many places. In amongst some of the bushier vegetation are gossamer shards of a web-like substance, that can be used to induce divinatory visions. These webs seem as if they should be made by spiders or similar creatures. Instead they are a natural substance that grows in the bushes just here. In and under the rubble elsewhere are a couple of intact old wooden beams, and pieces of several more broken ones. They look to have fallen as part of the general destruction. They are surprisingly lightweight, while also being very strong, and have a dimpled outer surface. Each intact beam is about 12 ft long by a foot square (3.5 m by 30 cm), and if the pair were cleared of their trapping rubble, they could be reused easily. However, if the wood is cut, it rapidly falls to pieces, as the fragments will do if picked-up.

**Courtyard Rubble Area C2:** Lost among the debris, rubble and plant growth here is a tastefully-designed bracelet that magically allows its wearer to command dragons. It also provides a luck-bending ability, and grants resistance against draconic attacks. Elsewhere in this Area is a waxy-surfaced, dappled gemstone that can magically create fires when wielded, while equally warding that person against the effects of fire.