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# Bitesize History - People

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## The Semple Family 1220 - 1727



The great feudal family of Semple and their rise to power was through the patronage of the House of Stewart. Their association with the Stewarts began before they rose



to the rank of royalty. The High Steward had been given significant land holdings in Renfrewshire. Robert de Sempill was a vassal of Elziotstoun in Renfrewshire in 1220. His son, also called Robert became Steward of the Barony of Renfrew in 1283. The barony was held by James 5<sup>th</sup> High Steward of Scotland (1283-1309).

The Semples were great supporters of Bruce.

Bruce's daughter Marjorie married (in 1314) *Elliston Castle*

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Walter, the son of James 5<sup>th</sup> High Steward. Walter became 6<sup>th</sup> High Steward of Scotland in 1309. When her brother, King David II, died in 1371 with no issue Marjorie and Walters son became King Robert II, the first Stewart King and the start of the dynasty.

The Semples close association with the High Stewards, their support of Bruce and ultimately the coming together of the office of High Steward and King under Robert II ensured their status and influence.

However by 1639 the 5<sup>th</sup> Lord Semple relinquishes the sheriffdom of Renfrew, baillie of the Regaility of Paisley and Stewardship of the barony of Ellistoun. The association with Lochwinnoch ends completely when Hugh 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Semple sells Castle Semple estate in 1727 to William McDowall.

In the intervening years the Semples led a colourful life being involved in various murders, supporting Mary Queen of Scots then fighting against her at the Battle of Langside where she was defeated and more recently the 19<sup>th</sup> Lord Semple was shown to have passed wartime secrets to the Imperial Japanese military. This is in sharp contrast to Hugh the 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Semple who led an exemplary military career commanding the Black Watch and reaching the rank of Brigadier General.



*Tomb of Lord John Semple  
in the Collegiate Church*