



Clan SEMPILL

ARMS	Argent, a chevron chequy Gules and of the First between three hunting horns sable garnished and stringed of the Second
CREST	A stag's head Argent attired with ten tynes Azure and collard with a prince's crown Or
MOTTO	Keep tryst
SUPPORTERS	Two greyhounds Argent, collared Gules
STANDARD	The Arms in the hoist and of two tracts Gules and Argent, upon which is depicted three times the Crest, ensigned of a Baron's coronet along with the Motto 'Keep tryst' in letters Gules upon two transverse bands Or

A name known in Renfrewshire from the twelfth century, its origin is obscure. The suggestion that it is a corruption of 'St Paul' seem unlikely, as is the tradition that the 1st of the name had a reputation for being humble or simple. Robert de Sempill witnessed a charter to Paisley Abbey around 1246, and later, as chamberlain of Renfrew, a charter of the Earl of Lennox. His two sons, Robert and Thomas, supported Robert the Bruce, and both were rewarded by the king for their services. The elder son received all the lands around Largs in Ayrshire which had been confiscated from the Balliols. Thomas received a grant of half of the lands of Longniddry.

The lands of Eliotstoun, which became the territorial designation of the chiefly line, were acquired prior to 1344. Sir Thomas Sempill of Eliotstoun fell at the Battle of Sauchiefurn fighting for James III in June 1488. His only son, John, succeeded to the family estates, and early in the reign of James IV – probably in 14188 – he was ennobled with the title, Lord Sempill. He founded the Collegiate Church of Lochwinnoch in 1505, and rebuilt the castle at the eastern end of the loch which he renamed Castle Semple. Like his father, he followed his king into battle, and died on the field of Flodden in September 1513. His eldest son, William, succeeded to the title, obtaining a charter to the lordships with the assistance of the Regent Albany, in 1515. He favored the betrothal of the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, to the son of Henry VIII of England. His son, Robert, Master of Sempill was constable of the king's Castle of Douglas, and was taken prisoner by the English at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547. Sometimes called the Great Lord Semple, he supported the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise, widow of James V. In 1560 his castle was attacked and seized for his opposition to the Reformation. He was a faithful adherent of Queen Mary until the death of Darnley, and thereafter he joined those who sought to promote Mary's son as King James VI. He fought against the queen and Bothwell at the Battle of Carberry Hill, and was one of the signatories of the warrant to confine the queen in Lochleven Castle. He led the van of Regent Moray's army at the Battle of Langside in 1568, and for this and other services he received a charter to the abbey lands of Paisley, which had been forfeited from Lord Claud Hamilton. Hamilton later regained the lands.

The murder of the regent was a setback to Sempill's ambitions, and in 1570 he was imprisoned for a year. By his second wife Lord Sempill had a son, John, who was castigated by the reformer John Knox as Sempill 'the dancer'. In 1577 John was accused of treason and conspiring to assassinate the Regent Morton. He was denounced by one of his own alleged accomplices, and was sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. The sentence was commuted to imprisonment by the influence of his family and friends, and he was later released. His elder half-brother, Robert, succeeded as fourth Lord Sempill in 1572. He assisted at the baptism of Prince Henry in 1594, and attended personally on the queen at the banquet held in celebration in the great hall of Stirling Castle. He was appointed Privy Councilor by James VI, and sent as ambassador to Spain. He would not renounce the Catholic faith, and therefore held no other high public office. In 1608 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland excommunicated him as 'an obstinate papist'.

The fifth Lord took little part in court intrigue or politics, but concentrated on his estates, where he is said to have lived in considerable splendor. He was succeeded by his brother, Robert, who also led a largely private life, but he supported the royalist cause in the civil war, and was fined under the Commonwealth as a consequence. His first two sons died without issue, and he was succeeded by his third son, Francis. The eighth Lord Sempill embraced the Protestant faith, and was the first Sempill to sit in Parliament since the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots. He died

without issue in 1684, when he was succeeded by his eldest sister, Anne, under a deed of entail which had been confirmed by the Crown in 1685. The baroness obtained a new charter to the title on 16 May 1688, in terms of which the title descended in default of any male issue, to her daughters, and with a special reservation to any of her heirs. Three of her sons were to succeed to the title.

Francis, Anne's eldest son and the tenth Lord, was an implacable opponent of the union with England, and voted in parliament against every article. He died unmarried in 1716, and was succeeded by his brother, John, who had supported the Hanoverian Government during the rising of 1715. John also died unmarried, and the title passed to his brother, Hew, a professional soldier who had made a reputation fighting on the Continent. At the Battle of Culloden, on 16 April 1746, he held the rank of brigadier general, and fought with his regiment on the left wing of the Government army.

In 1835 the title once more passed to the female line, when Maria Janet Sempill succeeded her brother, the fifteenth Lord. The title passed once more into the save hands of a lady, when the present chief, the twentieth in line of the peerage, succeeded her father in 1965.

Taken from "Scottish Clan & Family Encyclopedia", by Collins, HarperCollins Publishers 1994

This clan information sheet has been prepared by
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