
Bitesize History - Castles

Castletoun - Castle Semple



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In Blaeu's Atlas, published in 1654, the Castle is represented as one of the first magnitude. Hamilton, of Wishaw, in his Description of Renfrewshire, compiled about 1710, says that "the Lord Sempills hath long kept their residence at the house of Castlesempel, situated upon a fresh water Loch, near three miles long, and half a mile broad, called Lochwinnoch, or the Loch of Castlesempill.

The Castle of this name (if not referring to the circular eminence called Downies Castle), afterwards called the Castle Sempill, was built, probably, a little before the founding of the Collegiate Kirk of

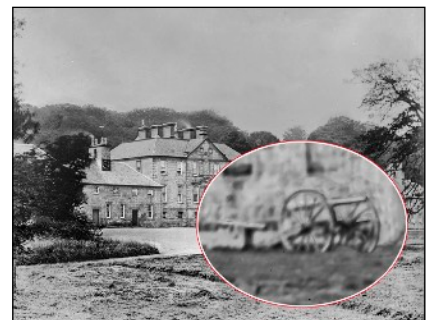
Lochwinnoch, in 1504, by John, 1st Lord Sempill. The charter of endowment of this Kirk makes no allusion to this Castle, and no mention of the name Castletoun. It states that this kirk is to be, or was, placed within the founder's "Park of Lochvinyok," and it is called the "Collegiate Kirk of Lochwinnoch," and not that either of Castletoun of the Castle of Sempill.

The founder was killed at Flodden, in 1513, and it was he who, it is understood, changed the name of the place from Castletoun—the name in the title deeds—to that of the Castle of Sempill.

Col. William McDowall, a younger son of McDowall of Garthland, bought at a judicial sale, in 1727, from that Lord Sempill who died at Aberdeen, in 1746, after the battle of Culloden. In the worst taste, he demolished the old Castle entirely in 1735, and erected a new mansion on its site, the house which presently exists—(Sempill's History, p. 149) In 1830, when Colonel Harvey, a succeeding proprietor, was repairing some drains near the house, the foundation walls of the old Castle were discovered some space below ground; and more recently, in digging for a foundation to a billiard room, they were again seen, and more than one cannon bullet of iron found, a large door or gate key, and other ancient curiosities, which are preserved at Castlesemple.



The Collegiate Church



Mansion and Cannon