

## The Maiden

Long before the French Revolution, the Scots had invented and were using the guillotine known as the Maiden. From 1564 up to 1708 when it was withdrawn from use, over 150 people had been executed with this 'humane' devise.

Perhaps the most famous victim of the Maiden was Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyll. In 1685, Archibald rebelled against King James VII in 1685. He was captured after his disastrous rising and taken to Edinburgh to face the Maiden. It had long been prophesized that Archibald would meet a violent death. The portent of his doom was revealed when it was noticed that he winked as he spoke.

Beheadings on the Maiden were popular events and the crowd expected a good show. Argyll didn't disappoint. He noticed that the block on which his head was to rest was uneven. He took out a rule and measured it before ordering it should be fixed by a carpenter. Argyll had never been renowned for his religious convictions, unlike his Presbyterian father who was also beheaded, but on the scaffold Argyll played every inch the martyr declaring *'I die not only a Protestant, but with a heart-hatred of popery, prelacy, and all superstition whatever'* before the Maiden took his head clean off.

Another famous victim of the Maiden was James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton the Regent of Scotland, during the reign of King James VI. From 1572 to 1580 Morton was the most powerful figure in the kingdom. In the turbulent years following the Reformation and the deposition of Mary, Queen of Scots, Morton had been a strong supporter of the Protestant cause. As regent he had quelled the ambitions of rival nobles, upheld royal authority against challenges from the Church and governed the Borders. In the course of his regency he made many enemies, which eventually caught up with him during an illicit love affair with Esme Stuart, a member of the court of young King James VI. The affair upset the king who regarded Esme as his 'favorite' and Douglas was arrested for treason in 1580 and executed on the Maiden in 1581.