**Mary Queen of Scots**

Mary was Queen of Scotland and reigned about 460 years ago. She was one of the most tragic queens in British history. Born in the year 1542, Mary was the third child (two young brothers had previously died) and the only daughter of James V of Scotland and his second wife Mary of Guise, a French noblewoman.

Her father James V died six days after her birth and with his death Mary became the infant queen. She and her mother were moved to the safety where sh was crowned Queen. The young queen was then entrusted to the care and protection of Lords Erskine and Livingstone.

A Promised Marriage with Prince Edward of England

In an effort to create an alliance with Scotland, King Henry VIII proposed a marriage between his young son Edward and the infant Mary. When his efforts failed, he launched a war on Scotland. This war was known as "The Rough Wooing." (1544-1551) After Henry VIII died in 1547, young Edward's uncle the Duke of Somerset continued on with the attempt to forcibly create an alliance between the two countries. This phase saw several invasions into Scotland. Shortly after the last invasion, where the Scots suffered a bitter defeat, Mary's mother sent her for security to Dumbarton Castle the stronghold most accessible to France.

First Marriage: the Dauphin

Ten years later she married Francis, son of Henry II, king of France, and his wife, Catherine de Medici. Unfortunately, this marriage did not last long as Francis died after only 2 years of marriage. Mary was inconsolable!

Second Marriage: Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley

In 1565 Mary married her cousin Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, an English nobleman. The bridegroom was proclaimed Henry, King of Scots. Their only child was to become James 1 of England. Mary soon became disenchanted with Henry, he had become overbearing, arrogant and carried away by his new title. He made enemies of some of the powerful nobles and, there was a plot to kill him. Some thought that Mary had knowledge of the plot. Henry, along with his servant, was found strangled to death after the gunpowder blast intended to take his life failed.

Third Marriage: James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell

The rift between Mary and her husband became public knowledge. She turned to a Scottish nobleman, a very powerful man, the Earl of Bothwell, for support. He and other Scottish noblemen proposed to do whatever they could to help the queen in her dilemma. This decision led to a failed explosion plot and to the strangulation death of Darnley. A few months later, Mary and the Earl married. This angered the populace who suspected Bothwell's participation in the murder of their King. Mary's subjects were outraged and turned against her.

She fled to England to ask for help from her cousin Queen Elizabeth I. Instead, she was imprisoned.

After 19 years of trying to obtain her freedom, she was charged and found guilty of taking part in a plot to kill Elizabeth. Mary was beheaded in 1587. She was 44 years old.