

Robert Smith's Death Mask

This is Robert Smith. This model of his head was made after he died. He was a murderer and the last criminal to be hanged in public in Scotland. This happened in Dumfries only 130 years ago.



- Robert Smith's death mask
- 1868
- Dumfries, Dumfriesshire
- He was hanged in Dumfries for murder in 1868, his was the last public execution to take place in Scotland

Robert Smith, orphaned at the age of eight, was working in a limekiln by the age of thirteen. In May 1868, aged only nineteen, he was hanged for murder in front of Dumfries Jail. His was the last public execution to take place in Scotland.

Three months earlier he had raped and strangled nine year old Thomasina Scott in a wood near Annan. The child had been on her way to buy groceries.

Afterwards Smith calmly walked into the town and bought tobacco. He then broke into a cottage near Cummertrees belonging to Jane Crichton, where he shot her, before stabbing and finally attempting to strangle her. The woman's screams attracted the attention of two local boys, and Smith ran off. He returned to his lodgings in Dumfries, where he was arrested a couple of days later.

After trial in Dumfries he was convicted of murder in April 1868. The court reporter described him as well built and of swarthy complexion, commenting, "his face indicates susceptibility to fits of extreme passion, it is not of the low criminal type".

In the collection of Dumfries Museum & Camera Obscura.

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