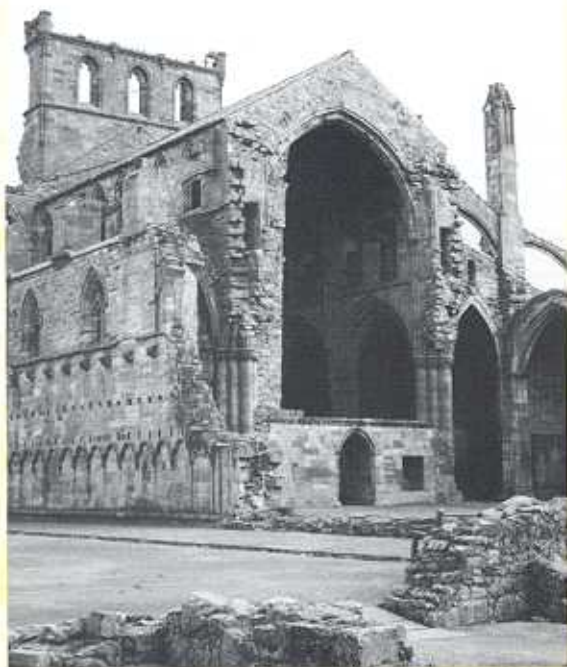




Melrose

Town Trail





INTRODUCTION

The Melrose Town Trail has been set up by Scottish Borders Council and Scottish Borders Tourist Board. The aim is to welcome the visitor to Melrose and provide an added dimension of local history and a flavour of the town's development through time.

Melrose is situated in the heart of the Scottish Borders. The town is skirted by the River Tweed and sheltered by the triple peaks of the Eildon Hills. The name Melrose is derived from a Cumbric (an early form of Welsh) word *Moelros* and means "bare moor" or "bare promontory". Melrose is in a perfect location for the visitor and local alike to enjoy the beauty and peace of the Borders. Although most of the buildings in the town date from more recent times, there are more than a few historical sites in the area for you to visit.

The Trail is approximately 4km (2.5 miles) long and takes about 2 hours to complete. Those with less time to spare may wish to reduce this by referring to the Trail map in the centre pages. The Trail starts and finishes at the Tourist Information Centre in Abbey House, situated opposite the Abbey.

In order to guide you, numbered plaques are sited along the route at specific points of interest and information relating to them can be found within this leaflet. Please note that many of the sites on the Trail are houses and you are requested to respect the privacy of the residents.

We hope that you enjoy walking around the Town Trail and that you will have a pleasant stay in the historic Burgh of Melrose.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area around Melrose has been inhabited for thousands of years. When the Roman army arrived in AD79 or 80 they were met by a native tribe, possibly the Selgovae, who had their hillfort base on Eildon Hill North. Contrary to the traditional view, the Romans were probably met with a peaceful reception when dealing with this tribe. The Romans established a fort 2.5km (1.5 miles) to the east of Melrose called Trimontium, "*Place of the Three Hills*" and built a signal station or shrine, enclosed by a circular ditch, on the summit of Eildon North Hill. The Romans never fully conquered Scotland and due to pressures elsewhere in their empire, they gradually withdrew their troops, finally leaving in AD369.

There then followed the "*Dark Ages*" during which Melrose was part of the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria. The Dark Ages also saw the arrival of Christianity in the Borders. Some time before AD650, a monastery was founded beside the Tweed at Old Melrose by St Aidan of Lindisfarne. One of the best known monks connected with the monastery was St Cuthbert. He was born in Lauderdale in AD634 and spent his early life as a shepherd, entering the monastery in AD651 after hearing of St Aidan's death and connecting it with a vision he had seen one night. Almost 500 years after the foundation of Old Melrose monastery, King David I (1124 - 1153) brought Cistercian monks from

Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire to Melrose and established the Abbey in its present location.

The Abbey suffered at the hands of English armies on several occasions making it necessary to rebuild and redesign the Abbey complex. Much of what survives today dates from 14th and 15th century reconstruction work. Melrose was made a Burgh of Barony in 1609 and raised to a Burgh of Regality in 1621.

In peace, Melrose became a thriving market town. Many famous people have visited Melrose, including Daniel Defoe and Dorothy and William Wordsworth. Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott both wrote of Melrose and Joseph Turner painted scenes of the town and its surroundings. With the arrival of the railway in the 19th century, access for visitors and commerce became even easier and the town expanded rapidly. For a time there was a linen industry producing high quality linen. However, nearby Galashiels drew much of the trade away and eventually the venture failed.

Melrose in recent years has become a quiet town, well able to supply the local community and farms. The undoubted beauty of the area has made it one of the most visited towns in Scotland.

Abbey House (1). The start of the Melrose Town Trail is at the Tourist Information Centre¹, located in Abbey House which dates from the late 18th century. Typically Scottish in its simplicity of detailing, the doorway is emphasised by a pilastered entrance and appears to be more grand than it actually is. The building has been extended to the west but since the style is the same, the visual effect is negligible. Behind Abbey House are the Abbey Gardens, which are open to the public. Turn left and walk towards the River Tweed and take the next road on your left to enter Harmony Hall.



Abbey House (1)

Harmony Hall (2). Built in 1807 as the home for Robert Waugh, a local joiner who made a fortune from a Jamaican plantation. On his return, he had this house built and named it after his plantation. His Jamaican house had a flight of stairs up to the entrance in order to keep wildlife at bay and local tradition has it that he wanted his house in Melrose to have a similar type of stairway.

¹ Open until the end of October

He surrounded the house and gardens with the high wall you see today. From then on, he hardly emerged from behind the walls except for the Abbotsford Hunt and he became known locally as "*Melancholy Jacques*". Waugh supplied the cedar timber for the library and drawing room when Sir Walter Scott built Abbotsford House.



Harmony Hall (2)

The National Trust for Scotland now owns Harmony and the gardens are open to the public (for a voluntary contribution) between April and September. Across from the entrance to Harmony Hall you can see the stables and coachman's house which were both associated with Harmony. Notice the fire insurance plaque on the pediment². Before a municipal fire service was set up, private companies would fight fires only if a building displayed the appropriate fire insurance plaque. This indicated that the owner had paid the insurance firm his dues and was therefore covered from risk. Retrace your steps and turn left into Annay Road.

² Pediment – a corniced gable

Corn Mill (3). The Abbey Mill shop sits on the site of the Abbey corn mill. The mill for the Abbey was built beside a lade, which diverted water from the River Tweed to power the mill wheel. The lower half of the corn mill was built in 1640 on the site of an earlier mill that provided the Abbey's bakehouse with flour. The bread baked in the bakehouse would have been a staple part of the monks' diet. According to contemporary accounts this was an imposing building. Cross the road and look through the iron yett³ in the wall. Through this you can see the lade which powered the mill. Return to the Abbey.

Melrose Abbey (4). The Abbey is in the care of Historic Scotland and there is an entrance charge*. Melrose Abbey was founded around 1136 by King David I and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The Border abbeys were centres of learning, politics, economic and cultural life. Throughout its working life Melrose Abbey was much favoured by royalty.

Melrose Abbey had the largest flock of sheep of any of the religious houses in the country; in the order of 15,000 by 1370. The wool which was produced was sold as far afield as the Low Countries and Italy. In addition, the Abbey owned around 8,900 hectares (22,000 acres) of land in the Borders and elsewhere. As centres of commerce and

*Please note, the Abbey Car Park is only for the use of visitors to the Abbey.

³ Yett - gate

therefore wealth, abbeys were natural targets for invading armies and Melrose was sacked on at least four occasions.

The heart of King Robert I (The Bruce) is buried in a leaden casket in Melrose Abbey. Widely recognised as the greatest knight in Christendom, Robert I had always wished to take part in a crusade. His wish was fulfilled only after his death, when his embalmed heart was carried in a leaden casket on a crusade by his great friend James Douglas, "*Good Sir James*". Tradition has it that Douglas hurled the casket at the Moors shouting "*Where Bruce leads, Douglas follows*". Bruce's heart was brought back to Melrose and buried in the Abbey, the rebuilding of which he had sponsored after a brutal English attack in 1322. On the site of the chapter house you will find a carved stone designed as the result of a public competition held in 1998, to commemorate the re-burial of the King's heart in the Abbey.

Originally, the Abbey building would have been richly decorated using lime washes, both inside and out. The statues of the saints, located in the now vacant niches, would have been similarly painted. This would truly have been a shining beacon in the countryside. You can still see some of the saintly statues, especially above the east window. You should also look out for the bagpipe-playing pig, the ceiling bosses, decorated corbels, the off-centre arches and the inscription carved by the master mason of the Abbey, Jean

Moreau, otherwise known as John Morow. The domestic buildings of the community lay to the north and the precinct of roughly 16 hectares (40 acres) was enclosed by a wall. What you see today are largely the remains of the Abbey Kirk, built in the late 14th to 16th century.

There is a story that the monks of Melrose saved the town from a spectre that had been plaguing the inhabitants for some time. The Vampire of Melrose was, during his lifetime, a chaplain to a lady who lived nearby. The chaplain was fond of all manner of sin and vice. When he died, he paid the price for his wrong doing as his soul could not find peace. The ghastly form stalked the streets at night in search of blood, terrifying the locals. The town's people turned to the church for a solution to their plight and the monks sought to answer their pleas. They prayed, fasted and challenged the ghoul, eventually defeating it. The monster's corpse was thrust into a fire, reducing it to ashes that were then carried by the wind over the Lammermuir Hills to the north.

The final attack on the Abbey came in 1545 when the Earl of Hertford bombarded the site with cannon he had set up, possibly at Gattonside on the northern bank of the River Tweed. Hertford was carrying out the orders of Henry VIII of England who wanted Queen Mary to marry his son - Prince Edward - whereby he would gain sovereignty over the Scots. After that attack, the Abbey was never

rebuilt to its former glory.

After the Reformation (1560) religion in Scotland was changed fundamentally and the Abbey was under the administration of lay Commendators⁴. Instead of the monks being able to use the funds generated by the Abbey as they saw fit, the money was put to other uses by the Commendators. Starved of their income and no longer allowed to recruit new monks, the religious community died out shortly after 1590. The Abbey became neglected and was used as a source of building materials for the town.



Melrose Abbey (4)

The last Commendator was James Douglas and after Douglases resignation in 1608 King James VI granted the Abbey lands to John Ramsey, Vicount Haddington. The Commendator's House is within the Abbey precinct (entry to which is covered by the Abbey entrance fee) and was built in the 15th century as the abbot's quarters. Being a

⁴ *Commendator - a person appointed to administer the Abbey and draw revenue without having to perform religious duties.*

Commendator was a risky business due to the prestige and wealth attached to the job and gunloops were incorporated for defensive purposes. The House contains a small museum with many relics from the Abbey and nearby Trimontium. Looking away from the Abbey you can see the Annay (meaning 'River Island') which were the fields farmed by the monks. During the years of the Second World War (1939-45) the Annay was the site of a prisoner of war camp.

By 1618, part of the nave⁵ had been adapted to serve as a parish church by building a rubble wall against the north arcade. After the Reformation, little respect was paid to the building and often cattle and sheep were to be found inside the building. By all accounts, the interior was gloomy, filthy and damp. This church continued in use until the 19th century when construction of the new parish church (12) began in 1808. By then, the Abbey had suffered a great deal of abuse and the Duke of Buccleuch (owner of the Abbey) cleared a large amount of rubbish off the site. Sir Walter Scott was so alarmed at the state of the building that he made direct appeals to the Duke to carry out repairs. Eventually, the Duke allowed Scott to direct his builder to undertake whatever work he saw as necessary to safeguard the building. The first part of the Abbey to be repaired was the east window, where work started in the spring of 1822.

⁵ nave - the part of the building used by the congregation.

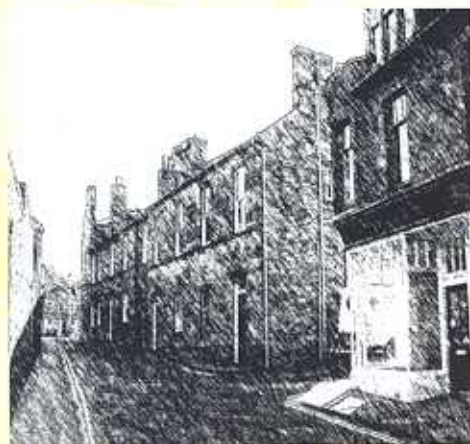
The town owes its existence to the Abbey. As a centre of pilgrimage, houses would have been set up close to the main gate of the precinct for the use of visitors and pilgrims. A separate entrance would have been provided for those living and working within the precinct.

Turn left and enter Priorwood Gardens.

Priorwood Gardens (5). Located immediately adjacent to the National Trust for Scotland shop you will find Priorwood Gardens, open from April until Christmas Eve and a voluntary contribution may be made for entry. These gardens once belonged to the Curle family who owned Priorwood House, now the Melrose Youth Hostel. Over the garden gates you can see the initials of James and Blanche Curle who moved into their family home when they married in 1904. Within the gardens there are many apple trees, some of which are direct descendants of those grown by the monks of the Abbey. The old potting shed has been turned into an exhibition area and within the gardens is a flower-drying business, which has acquired an excellent reputation. On leaving the gardens, turn left and head up Abbey Street towards Market Square.

Melrose Town House (6). Half-way up Abbey Street on the right is the former Melrose Town House dating from 1822. At roof level of the gable you can see a simple bell. On the front of the building is a

memorial tablet, commemorating the fact that the Duke of Buccleuch gifted the Town House to Melrose in 1896. Above this is an armorial panel which probably belonged to Abbot William Turnbull, dating from the 16th century and taken from the Abbey. When it was carved, it was copied from the stamp used to seal the Abbot's documents and consequently its details appear reversed.



Melrose Town House (6)

In 1813, the Burgh Council provided a new public well and in 1838 when a local water company was established, the people of Melrose were able to request a piped supply. The Burgh Council was late in introducing street lighting in comparison with other Border towns. It was not until 1836 that gas lighting was installed, fully 10 years after Hawick. Sewage removal was rudimentary in 19th century Melrose and there were several open sewers running through the town. Thankfully these have long gone!

Abbey Street was called "The Bow" until 1826, a name derived from the arched entrance gateway to the Abbey precinct which was located here.

At the end of the lane next to Melrose Town House is the site of a Parish School built about 1600. The first school had been located where the Station Hotel now stands, on the Dingleton Road. The Kirk made sure that theirs was the only school in "...Melrose, Danelitone [Dingleton], Darnick and Newstead...under pain of ten marks". It was decided in 1724 to "...put in windows, timber and glass..." as part of a programme of repairs and it can only be imagined what a miserable time the pupils had before the windows were glazed, especially during winter. The building needed extensive repairs in 1763, so a decision was taken to move the school to a chapel in the south aisle of the Abbey. Continue up Abbey Street and into Market Square.

Mercat Cross. The Mercat Cross was traditionally a symbol of the trading rites of Scottish market towns and villages. A law passed by King William I (1165-1214) required that all goods for sale in burghs be presented at the "mercatur and mercatur cross". Not only were crosses centres of trade and symbols of a town's trading status, they were also used as sites of proclamation and punishment of criminals, usually in the form of public humiliation. The Mercat Cross of Melrose was originally the cross that had

been at the entrance to the Abbey precinct at 'The Bow'. It had an associated piece of land nearby called 'Corse Rig', the rent from which was used for maintenance purposes. The shaft was replaced in 1988 and the metal staple which held the joughs (iron neck ring in which criminals were shackled) was fitted to the new shaft. The octagonal base dates from the mid 19th century, having replaced a set of five steps. The capital (which was replaced in 1990) takes the form of a unicorn, the heraldic supporter for the Scottish Royal Arms.

A public well was located near the Cross but this is now covered over. A fresh water supply was carried to the Abbey precinct in a system of lead pipes from springs at nearby Dingleton. Bear left and head through the

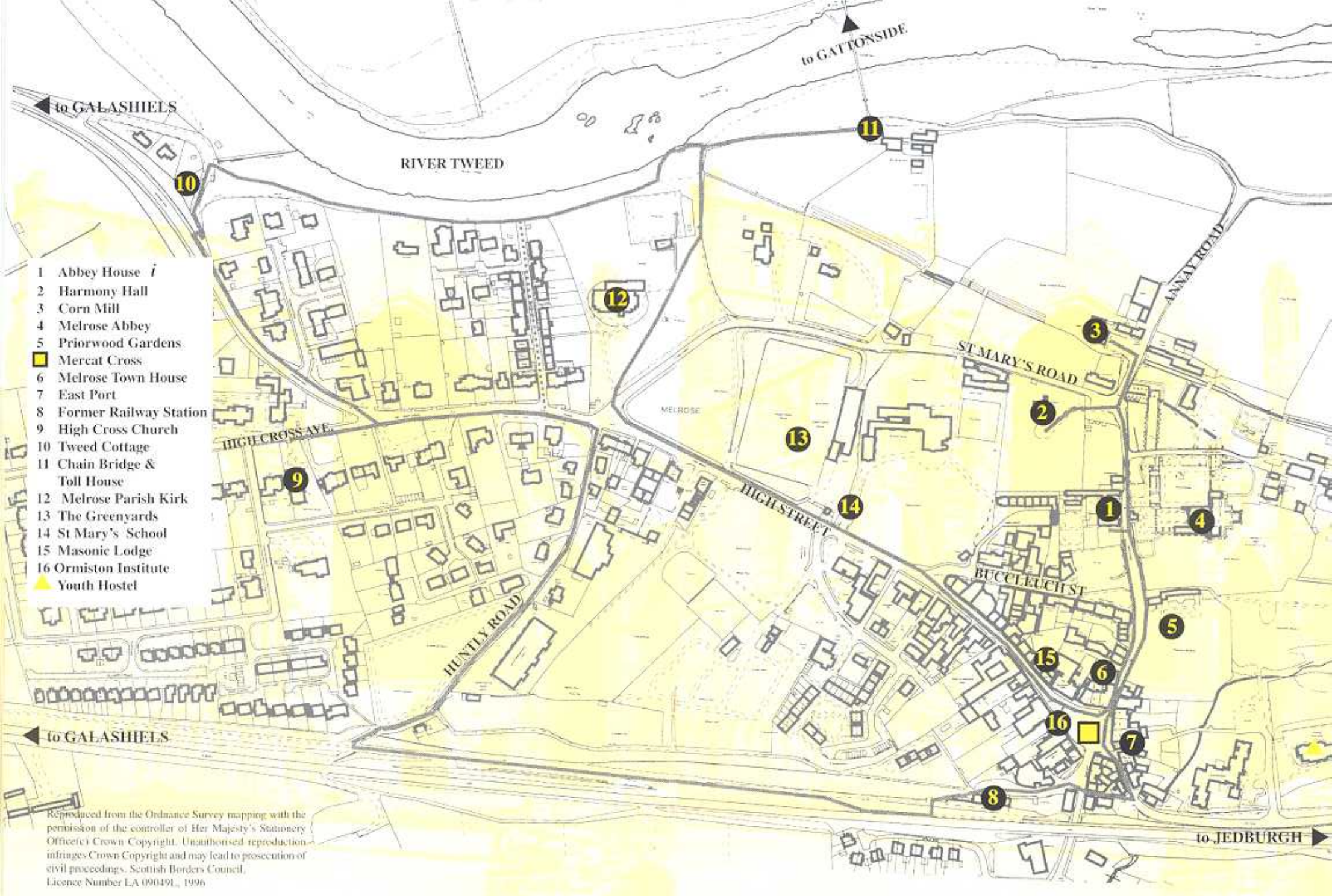


Mercat Cross

narrow street called East Port. Notice the sundial on the fishmonger's shop on the corner and the ceiling boss from the Abbey which is built into the wall above MacFarlane's shop opposite. As the footpaths are very narrow, you should take care at this particular point.

East Port (7). The narrow street by the Ship Inn - which was originally two houses with their gable ends to the street - is East Port, the historic eastern entrance gate to the town. In East Port is a house with a rounded gable which was the town's toll house and until 1855, the sergeant of police's house. Here, traders paid a charge to set up their stalls and barriers were erected when disease was rife. The most feared disease of all was the plague or "Black Death". When there was an outbreak in English border towns in the summer of 1636, the markets and fairs in Melrose, Coldstream, Duns, Hawick, Kelso and Selkirk were cancelled in an attempt to stop the plague spreading. A similar measure was taken in 1637 but the disease spread over the border resulting in many deaths. In March 1638, a law was made which forbade anyone to cross the border with England. All these measures meant a loss in trade and income to the town and yet had little effect in halting the spread of the plague.

Turn right into Scotts Place. Cross the Dingleton Road which leads up towards the golf course (at one time Melrose Common) where until 1897, various livestock markets

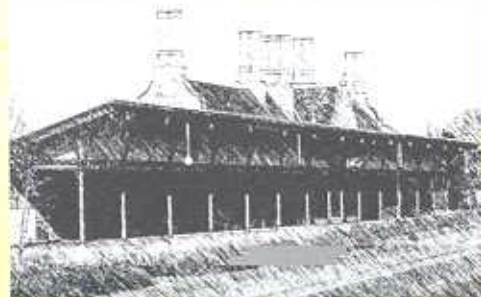


- 1 Abbey House *i*
- 2 Harmony Hall
- 3 Corn Mill
- 4 Melrose Abbey
- 5 Priorwood Gardens
- Mercat Cross
- 6 Melrose Town House
- 7 East Port
- 8 Former Railway Station
- 9 High Cross Church
- 10 Tweed Cottage
- 11 Chain Bridge & Toll House
- 12 Melrose Parish Kirk
- 13 The Greenyards
- 14 St Mary's School
- 15 Masonic Lodge
- 16 Ormiston Institute
- ▲ Youth Hostel

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were held. Just to the right of the junction is Station Hotel, the site of the first Parish School. Head up Palma Place towards the former railway station in front of you.

Former Railway Station (8). The first talk of a 'railway' through Melrose was in 1810 when the ground between Glasgow and Berwick was surveyed. It was 39 years before the railway - in the form of a line from Edinburgh to Hawick - came to Melrose and the station opened as a two platform 'through station'. This is an impressive and elegant building. From the town side, it appears like a Jacobean house and has a shapely gable and tall octagonal chimneys. A product of the age when travelling by train was commonplace, those travelling from Melrose must have felt they were entering a stately home as they approached the porch. Climb the stairs to the platform⁸.



Former Railway Station (8)

Arriving by train was also a visual experience, as can be seen from the platform side. The high sweep of the awning, the cast

⁸ Those with wheelchairs and prams can gain access via the sloped path at the end of the building.

iron columns and detailed woodwork enhance the building. This platform canopy was once mirrored on the other side of the track. The railway which once brought visitors and commerce to Melrose, was removed at the end of the 1960s, a victim of the savage cuts in railway services throughout the country. Fortunately the station building remains and now houses a restaurant and small businesses. Walk westwards along the path beside the roadway that follows the route of the railway. Each spring, daffodils bloom along this stretch of road and is called The Field of Hope. This colourful display is in aid of the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity.

After about 500 metres, turn right into Huntly Road. On the right is Melrose Grammar School, the town's primary school and on the left is Weirhill Cemetery. At the end of Huntly Road, turn left into High Cross Avenue.

It was in this area of the town, Weirhill, that food markets were once held. A case was taken to court in August 1616 against a group of men from Melrose that "...insolently destroyed..." two full barrels of ale, bread and other foodstuffs. They also assaulted a trader by punching and kicking him, even though he was disabled. The case was dropped as there was lack of evidence and the men escaped the punishment of public humiliation at the Mercat Cross. High Cross Avenue is lined with 19th century villas, hinting at the wealth of the town.

High Cross Church (9). A short distance along High Cross Avenue is High Cross Church, designed by the architectural firm of Peddie and Kinnear in 1866. The gable of the church is very broad and is Romanesque in style. There is a large circular stained glass window in the centre of the gable, which is mirrored in the other gable. The large tower with its octagonal spire (which was added in 1892) has elements of Scots Baronial architecture.

The church was built for the United Presbyterian Church but is now a Roman Catholic church after being sold by the congregation in 1984. Almost opposite is



High Cross Church (9)

the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church which was designed in the mid 1840s by the famous architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, who also designed Liverpool Cathedral. The building

⁷ transepts - transverse portion of a cross shaped church.

⁸ chancel - part of church containing altar.

was increased in size in 1900 by the addition of the transepts⁷ and a chancel⁸. Next door is Holy Trinity Rectory, which was completed in 1848 on a site that slopes towards Waverley Road. Notice the steeply pitched roofs and original octagonal chimney pots. A further 250 metres along this road is the site of the 'High Cross' where pilgrims coming from the west caught their first sight of the Abbey.

Return to the junction of High Cross Avenue and Waverley Road then turn left. Beside the Rectory is Old Abbey School. Built at the same time as the Rectory, this single storey building was once a school although it was converted into a house some time ago. Continue along the road towards the edge of the town.

On your right, set back from the road, is the imposing manse of Melrose Parish Church, which is painted a cream colour. This was built in 1901 in the Scots Baronial style. The architect, Andrew Haiton, gave the building a contemporary feel by using arts and craft details in red sandstone, which is typical of the period.

The large area of open ground on your left provides grazing for horses and practice pitches for Melrose Rugby Football Club. This area of the town is known as Bleachfield and was formerly associated with the local linen industry. During the heyday of 'Melroseland linen', the Bleachfield was where cloth was laid out and bleached clean

with by sun. It was established in 1748 by the local minister, James Brown, who did a great deal to encourage the industry. This was a profitable time for the town and the output was in excess of 33,000 yards by 1755. The traditional linen market was in Priorwood, to the east of Market Square. The weavers operated manual looms but, with the growth of mechanised woollen mills in Galashiels and their greater output and higher wages for the workers, the industry faded away rapidly in Melrose. To compound the linen manufacturers' problems, the price of Dutch flax rose to a level the weavers could not afford. After the decline of the linen industry, the weavers converted to manufacturing cotton and the Bleachfield continued in use.

Tweed Cottage (10). Taking care, cross the road and descend the steps⁹. In front of you is Tweed Cottage, which is built of concrete and was originally called 'Concrete Cottage' and later "Laundry Cottage". This section of road was once known as "Laundry Corner" This was the residence of the pumpman for the Waverley Hydropathic Hotel 500m to the west. The spring water for the hotel came from St Helen's Well and its flow was controlled from here. This was one of the holy wells - named after saints - which supplied Melrose with drinking water.

⁹ Those with pushchairs or wheelchairs should note that by returning along Waverley Road, High Cross Avenue and approaching St Mary's from High Street, only a short section of the walk is missed. Should you wish to get a view of the River, access can be gained by going up Weirhill Place

Others included St Dunstan's, St Mary's and St William's. The water from these consecrated wells was considered to be a "sovereign remedy against cholicks".

The hotel (now the Waverley Castle Hotel) opened in 1869 and is also constructed from concrete. In conjunction with Tweed Cottage, these two buildings may represent some of the earliest use of in-situ concrete construction in Scotland. Waverley Castle Hotel is built on 'Skirmish Field', the site of a battle in July 1526 at which the young King James V was present as a prisoner of the Douglas family. The combined forces of the Scotts, Kerrs and Elliots fought unsuccessfully to free the king.

Turn right and walk along the path at the top of what is known locally as the 'Scaurs'. Please note that this can be muddy during the winter months. From this path you can gain a fine view of the River Tweed. You can also see the Chain Bridge to the east. You should head towards this. From this point to the Chain Bridge, you are following the Southern Upland Way which stretches 340km (212 miles) from Portpatrick in Dumfries and Galloway to Cockburnspath on the Berwickshire coast.

A particularly fine view of Gattonside village over the river can be gained from the highest part of the path. Melrose Cauld can be seen at close hand from the steps behind the bowling green. Care should be taken here as the wall is low and the water is fast

running. A cauld was built here by the monks to divert water into the mill lade. The water powered the mill and a supply was diverted off this for the Abbey wash house and sewage system. The sluice gate is still there and maintained. As you continue towards the chain bridge, you can see what remains of the lade on your right hand side.

Chain Bridge and Toll House (11). This suspension footbridge crosses the River Tweed and gives access to the village of Gattonside on the north of the river, where in 1545 the Earl of Hertford may have set up his cannon to bombard the Abbey. The bridge was opened formally on 26th October 1826. There was also a ford river crossing just down stream for horse drawn vehicles. The paving of the ford was broken only in the 20th century when sewage pipes were laid to Gattonside.

Several conditions were placed upon the use of the bridge, including the constraint that no more than eight people should be on the bridge at one time. It was also a statutory offence to make the bridge swing. Notices are still displayed at either end notifying those crossing of the various restrictions. The



Chain Bridge and Toll House (11)

bridge underwent major repairs in 1991 when the chains and footway were removed and repaired and the 'swing' was cancelled out.

The house at the end of the bridge was at one time the toll house and was built at the same time as the bridge. Before the wooden porch was built, the door faced directly along the bridge and the toll man could see if anyone was crossing or how many people were on the bridge. Since payment had to be made to cross the bridge, the ford continued to be used for many years. There was a box of stilts at each end of the ford for people to use when crossing the river and even as late as 1929 the refuse cart made frequent ford crossings to and from Gattonside. Should you have time, it is well worth taking a walk into the village and looking back to Melrose. The view that the Earl of Hertford would have seen whilst directing the English bombardment of the Abbey would not have been too dissimilar.

"*The Battery*" is a set of earthen banks alongside the river, set slightly back from the water's edge. The monks built these to keep flood waters away from the Annay, the fields between the Abbey and the Tweed, where they grew a fair proportion of their food. Return along the path until you reach the cauld, then turn left towards the town centre.

Melrose Parish Kirk (12). This building was constructed between 1808 and 1810, dedicated to St Cuthbert and it replaced the

Abbey as a place of worship. A fire in 1908 destroyed much of the building and a new kirk was built which incorporated the tower and spire of its predecessor. The War Memorial at the edge of the kirk grounds was erected in memory of the men of Melrose who died in the First World War. After the Second World War, the names of those who died in that conflict were added. Go down hill to High Street and turn left.

The Greenyards (13). On your left hand side is one of the former landholdings of Captain Stedman who was in the 26th



Melrose Parish Kirk (12)

Regiment of Foot. This area is called The Greenyards and was gifted to the town by Charles Ormiston, a former seed merchant from Melrose. In ancient times, this was a marsh, which the monks drained and used as a grazing ground and market for sheep. Nowadays, this is the home ground of Melrose Rugby Football Club, one of the most respected clubs in the sport. It was here that the game of Rugby Sevens was invented in 1883 by Ned Haig, a Jedburgh-born butcher who played as a three-quarter for Melrose. Every year in spring-time, the

Greenyards comes alive with rugby teams and supporters from all over the World, keen to see their team win one of the most prestigious tournaments in the game.

Notice the 'press box' - which dates from the 1930s - in the roof of the stand with the famous yellow letters MRFC against a black background - the team colours. From this box,



The Greenyards (13)

journalists have reported the results from The Greenyards to the world. The team colours were adopted when the club split from Galashiels Rugby Football Club in 1877. During the split, the goal posts and the club minute book were removed from Galashiels to Melrose and to this day there is a fierce sporting rivalry between the two clubs. The small area of ground to the west of the rugby pitch once contained a pond and it is easy to imagine Captain Stedman and his young wife, Sophia Mercer, taking a stroll across the Greenyards and around the pond.

Across High Street from the Greenyards is Gibson Park. The Gibson family, who had long been associated with Melrose, gave the land to the town. Within the park can be

found tennis courts and a caravan park. At the north west corner of the park is the old fire station. This simple stone building has a pitched roof with an air raid siren-dating from the Second World War - on its ridge. The station was big enough for only one old style fire appliance. This has now been replaced by a more modern building a little further along High Street.

From this part of the town, you can get a good view of the Eildons, the hills that tower over Melrose and dominate the skyline for miles around. Legend has it that they were created when Sir Michael Scott, supposedly a wizard (in fact a 13th century philosopher) set the Devil three tasks. The first of these was to cleave the head of mighty Eildon Hill into three, the second was to bridle the Tweed with a Cauld above Kelso and yet another was to make ropes from sand at Berwick. The first two were completed with ease but the last trial keeps the Devil busy to this day, since the tide keeps washing his work away. Sir Michael Scott is said to be buried in the grounds of Melrose Abbey.

Another local legend associated with the Eildons is that King Arthur and his knights fought their last great battle nearby at Gala Water, in the Vale of Woe. After the battle, Arthur and his warriors were laid in a chamber deep within the Eildon Hills, ready to defend the country again if and when the need arises. Yet another is that Thomas Learmont- True Tammas- fell asleep under the Eildon tree and met and kissed the queen

of the fairies. He then gained powers to see the future and many of his prophecies came true.

St Mary's School (14). Immediately adjacent to the Greenyards is St Mary's School. The school is built on the grounds of Abbey Park, the house of Captain Stedman. The oldest part of the house dates from 1820 and has an elegant bowed central bay with an armorial panel over the doorway. Stedman owned a great deal of land around the house, including an extensive orchard stretching to the Abbey. He was chairman of various civic bodies in the town and played an important part in the life of Melrose during the 19th century. Continue up High Street towards Market Square.



St Mary's School (14)

Melrose Masonic Lodge (15). The Lodge of Melrose St John is located where High Street joins Market Square and is reputed to be the joint oldest such institution in Scotland. It is said that the masons who founded the Lodge, which was originally sited in Newstead, worked on the Abbey during its early stages of construction. The lodge moved to Melrose in 1791.

On December 27, St John the Evangelist's Feast Night, the Freemasons of the town and from further afield take part in the 'Masons Walk', a torch-light procession. This involves walking around the Mercat Cross three times led by a band playing "The Merry Masons". From here the band leads the procession to the Abbey where a short service and ceremony is held. Afterwards, they return to their Lodge for a social event.

The plan of the town centre has changed little over the years although the buildings certainly have. Until the 17th century, most domestic buildings in Scottish towns were thatched. However, in 1681 a Parliamentary Act was passed which stipulated that roofing material should be "lead, slate, scailzie¹⁰, or tile and no otherwise". This was in an attempt to stop fire spreading from building to building. To the rear of the houses were the 'backlands' or gardens, which were roughly three times as long as they were broad and these would sometimes contain a private well. Here the householders would have grown some produce and kept animals and even carried out industrial activity on a small scale. Before an effective public sewage system was introduced, the backlands would also have contained a cesspit, hopefully a fair distance from the well.

Today, Market Square has many interesting buildings. For example there is the former Corn Exchange which now contains a

chemist's shop. This was designed in the early 1860s in a Scots Jacobean style by David Cousins, who used to be the City Architect for Edinburgh. On the building you can see the carved initials of the architect and also MFC, standing for Melrose Farmers' Club.

Ormiston Institute (16). Next door is the Ormiston Institute, bequeathed to the town for recreational purposes by Charles Ormiston. Above the entrance there is a memorial clock dates which from 1892, dedicated to the physician and surgeon John Meikle. Inside is the Trimontium Exhibition, run by the local group the Trimontium Trust, showing many features of life on the Roman frontier and this is open from April until the end of October. The exhibition houses a variety of finds from the site of the Roman fort and camps and no visit to Melrose would be complete without a visit to this museum. In addition, guided walks are organised and led by members of the Trimontium Trust on Thursday afternoons from Easter to September. These take in some of the local sites associated with the Roman occupation of the Borders. Opposite is the red sandstone Bank of Scotland with its high round headed gable.

The importance of Melrose as a visitor attraction and market town is reflected in the number of hotels around the Square. Notable examples include 'Burts', 'The George & Abbotsford', 'King's Arms' and the 'Bon-Accord'. The latter of these was once the

¹⁰ pronounced 'scailvie' - stone shingles.



Bank of Scotland Building


family home of Catherine Helen Spence whose family emigrated to Australia in 1839 when she was 14 years old. Once there, she became a social and political reformer, eventually being called "*The Grand Old Woman of Australia*". It was here also that a meeting took place between Generals Eisenhower, Montgomery and Sikorsky prior to the D-Day landings in 1944.

One of the most colourful events in the town involves trying to catch and hide a rugby ball (called the marriage ball) which is kicked in to the crowd by a bride on her wedding day. Whoever catches the wedding ball has to hide it for three days, after which it becomes theirs and a much treasured object. This custom is derived from the ancient game called Handba' which is still played in some Border towns.

The Melrose Festival was inaugurated in 1936, based on the earlier local event known as the "*Dingleton Picnic*" which was held on Melrose Common. In 1937, the girl dux of the local school became the first Melrose Festival Queen. In 1938, the first Melrosian - the town's principal - was appointed. The Festival is held each June and, like many other Border towns that hold common ridings, the week-long event is keenly awaited. On the Saturday, the festival cavalcade visits the sites associated with the history and culture of Melrose, places such as: Trimontium; Gattonside; Darnick Tower; Abbotsford and the Abbey. During the celebrations, the Melrosian, his supporters, the Festival Queen and her Court are welcomed at nearby Abbotsford, the former home of Sir Walter Scott. The party then returns to the Abbey where there is a re-enactment of the granting by King David I of the charter to Melrose Abbey.

From the corner of Market Square, turn down Abbey Street and head back towards the Tourist Information Centre and the end of this walk through Melrose, its architecture and history. Being a short walk, it has not been possible to include everything of interest but we hope that this has been enough to give you a flavour of the town and trust that you will return soon.



*Scottish
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COUNCIL



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