

Melrose Abbey

In September some of the Knights from the Autonomous Grand Priory of Scotland paid a visit to the Abbey as this was where the Cistercians started in Scotland.

Melrose Abbey was founded in 1136 by Cistercian monks at the request of David I Robert the Bruce's embalmed heart is buried at Melrose.

The east end of Melrose Abbey was completed in 1146, with further buildings being added over the next 50 years. King Edward I, 'the Hammer of the Scots' attacked Melrose Abbey in 1300 and 1307. His son and successor Edward II looted and desecrated the abbey in 1322. It was rebuilt with the help of Robert the Bruce.

The Abbot of Melrose was in charge of the Abbey. He led the monks in prayer and song, and made sure the life of the monks followed the strict rules of the Cistercian Order. Lay brethren carried out work for the Abbey including building and farming. The monks of Melrose grew wealthy from the wool trade. Their flock of around 15,000 sheep was one of the largest in the whole of Britain. Wool from the Borders was traded with Flanders on the Continent.

In 1996 a conical lead casket containing an embalmed human heart found at Melrose was examined by experts then reburied. Some people believe it is the heart of Robert the Bruce. Bruce's heart was carried by Sir James Douglas in an enamelled silver casket.