

MELROSE ABBEY

**THE ENGINE SHED**
AN SEADA EINNSEIN
SCOTLAND'S BUILDING CONSERVATION CENTRE



STONEMASON

CHISEL

SOFT CAPPING

MELROSE ABBEY



Who lived at Melrose Abbey?

For over 450 years the rose-coloured stone ruins of Melrose Abbey were home to a community of Cistercian monks. The abbey was founded in 1136 but was greatly damaged during the Wars of Independence in the 1300s. Most of the abbey was rebuilt after these attacks.

Traditional skills and materials at Melrose Abbey

Melrose Abbey is an impressive building because of the grand stonework of the medieval masons who built it. It has high stone vaults and skilfully carved stone windows. There are also sculptures of many different characters like hobgoblins and demons, cooks with ladles, and a famous bagpiping pig!

Historic Environment Scotland stonemasons maintain and repair the abbey using traditional tools and techniques, which the medieval monks would have found familiar. Stones that need to be repaired or replaced are cut to shape with metal chisels and a special round type of mallet called a mell. These tools have not changed very much since the Middle Ages.

The abbey's fragile walls are protected from rainfall by covering their tops with layers of turf. This technique is called soft capping and is one method of conserving historic buildings from increased rainfall caused by climate change.

Today, you can visit Melrose Abbey to explore the remains of the impressive site and admire the skilled work of medieval stonemasons and the modern stonemasons, who look after the abbey now.

The Engine Shed

The Engine Shed is Scotland's dedicated building conservation centre based in Stirling, Scotland. It is run by Historic Environment Scotland, the lead public body set up to investigate, care for and protect promote Scotland's historic environment. We are passionate about our built heritage and have an extensive outreach and education programme to enthuse and engage people of all ages.

We hope you enjoy using this resource! If you have any feedback for us, please e-mail us at technicaleducation@hes.scot.