

The Border Abbeys – 24 July 2022 – Scotland, United Kingdom

By Tom Allin

We overslept this morning – I set my alarm for 7:30 PM instead of 7:30 AM. I was awake about two minutes before the owner of the Horse and Hound knocked on our door at 9:00 AM letting us know we were late for breakfast. However, by 10:00 we were driving the winding single lane roads with abbeys to see and Edinburgh to sleep as our goals for the day.

We enjoyed the Horse and Hound Pub because of its name not its small room. However, we thought the small room was a great room because it was the only room within 25 miles or more that was available to two Americans who aren't used to making reservations more than 24 to 48 hours in advance. The pub had beer and pub food which means the beer was good and the food was OK.

Leaving Horse and Hound we had less than an eight-mile journey which I drove in less than 30 minutes. What was amazing about this trip was I made no wrong turns and there was a parking space in front of the abbey ruins – I am not sure which was the bigger miracle.



The church ruins of the abbey.

Jedburgh Abbey is the most complete border abbey in spite of being set on fire nine times. It was founded by King David I in 1138 and is one of four major abbeys built in the 12th century along the Scottish borders. The Abbey is located ten miles north of the border with England.



A model of the Jedburgh Abbey. The far right of the model is the abbey's church.

The Abbey was destroyed by the English for the first time in 1297 following their defeat at Stirling by William (Braveheart) Wallace. Then again, the English destroyed the Abbey after defeating Robert the Bruce in 1346. It appears to me the English liked destroying the Abbey because it made no difference if they were defeated or if they won when battling the Scots, they then destroyed the Abbey. Various English armies set fire or more to the Abbey four more times between the 1400s and 1544. But it was the Scottish Reformation that ended the Abbey's existence – a Christian religion not an army was the cause of the final destruction of the Christian Abbey.



Looking across the abbey's buildings at the church ruins.



The lower two rows of arches are Roman style and the top row are Arabic in style.



The West Processional Doorway, a restorational feature, built in 1876.







The Abbey's church was fenced off due to possibility of falling stones.

After an hour at the Abbey we walk several blocks of the town and stopped at Mary Queen of Scots visitor center. The center tells the story of Mary Queen of Scots. Our final stop was a small fish and chip take away where we ordered and then ate our food on an outdoor picnic bench. Next stop Melrose Abbey.



Melrose Abbey another of the four major abbeys founded in 1136.





The last army to attack the abbey was Cromwell's during the English Civil War. Below: one of the carvings Melrose is famous for.





The Abbey was dissolved in 1609 near the end of the Scottish Reformation.





Robert the Bruce's heart was supposed to have been buried at the Abbey. A metal box was found containing a human heart and since there is no other record of a buried heart it's believed this heart in a metal box is Robert the Bruce's heart.

Robert the Bruce's body is buried at Dunfermline Abbey.





I walked by this garden on my way back to Nancy and the car. The above garden is a town garden surrounded by a rock wall.

