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H. A. B. Tablet  
Evesham Masonic Temple

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The  
H. A. B. Legend  
Melrose Abbey  
= A.D. 1616 =

Evidence of the use of the Hiram A.P. Legend in Freemasonry, as early as the beginning of the 17th Century, is to be found in the ruins of the ancient Abbey at Melrose.

Inside the choir, or roofed-in part, at the N.W. end of the cornice is inserted a carved stone, evidently taken from some other part of the building and built into this position when the Choir was being fitted up as the Parish Church of Melrose (Presbyterian) in 1616.

This stone, originally supposed to represent the Christ, is marked in such a way as to make it represent H.A.B. It was so marked by the Masons of Newstead at the time it was inserted, thus inferring that the legend of H.A.B. was known to the Masons of Newstead long before it was adopted in Masonry elsewhere.

The Monastery had its staff of working masons to do repair work. Some of these had been members of the travelling bands of masons from the Continent—the Cathedral Builders of the Middle Ages, and bore names of French extraction. They settled in the village of Newstead at the time of the Reformation.

Outside the South door of the Abbey is a grave which bears this inscription: "*Here lies Andrew Meir, Meayson in Neustead, sum tyme callit was, who deceisit in ano 1624, and of his age 63.*" Below this is a shield containing a square in chief with crossed compasses under. This Andrew Meir was probably the foreman or Master Mason of the works and was apparently of French origin. His house at Newstead became the Lodge and was used as such until 1743 when the Lodge was transferred to Melrose. Two other inscriptions with Masonic interest are also to be found in Melrose, on the West Wall of the South Transept. The first reads (transcribed from the old Scots): "*John Moss sometime called was I and born in (this) parish certainly, and had in keeping all mason work of St. Andrews, the High Kirk of Glasgow, Melrose and Paisley; of Nithsdale and Galloway. I pray to God and Mary both and sweet St. John to keep this holy kirk from harm.*"

The second, which is round the lintel of the door leading up to the tower, consists of a Shield with two crossed compasses surrounded by fleurs de lys and inscribed at the side: "*As the compass goes evenly about, so truth and loyalty shall look to the end, quoth John Morrow (Morro).*" These inscriptions date from the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th Centuries.

W.J.C.  
F.D.

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