



news

No. 4, June 1992

'The time by the goodness of God will come, when the Catholic religion will again flourish in Scotland; and then, when posterity shall enquire, with a laudable curiosity, by what means any sparks of the true faith were preserved in these dismal times of darkness and error, Scalan and the other colleges will be mentioned with veneration, and all that can be recorded concerning them will be recorded with care ...' (Rev. John Geddes, Rector of Scalan 1762 to 65)



Editorial

Summer again and the sun shines on Scalan. This is a chance to invite as many of you as can make it to the Annual Pilgrimage Mass. For the record (and your holiday plans in future years) this is always held on the first Sunday in July 5th July this year at halfpast three. Once again a bus party containing several elderly people is coming up from Edinburgh and once again they will be looking for a lift. The road from Eskmulloch is causing the committee some concern but it is still possible to take a car up if you drive carefully.

All the news is good. We have a contractor, Mike Tait, who has a reputation for restoring old castles and he responded eagerly to the prospect of working on this humble building. He has joined the Association and promises to write an account of his project for the next *Scalan News*. The AGM took place on Tuesday 2 June, and the twenty or so members who were at Scalan then were heartened to find the Tait digger already on site.

Colonel Tait is an ex Gordon Highlander, now in the TA and not in the least blimpish. His tender was good enough to beat off other local builders and now that Moray District Council is clear that our committee does things properly a grant of £4,000 has come our way. This sum, on top of the other grants and donations, takes the funds to £21,000. Eighteen months ago the first newsletter registered the target of £20,000 with the comment, 'sounds like a lot for 162 members', so you see how far and fast we've come together. And membership is just about to break the 300 mark.

Once Scalan has been transformed from a leaking and dangerous building into something more like its 18th century self, what will members want the committee to do with their money? The question will become more urgent membership continues to climb, and a thousand subscribers by the year 2000 does not seem unlikely. The final part of David McNamee's 'Chisholm Trail' (in which you will learn why he chose that title) may suggest an answer, for in it he heads away from Scalan to other old sites and ends up at another old seminary.

The answer *may* be that the Scalan Association should be concerned with more than Scalan itself. It would need an AGM to agree, and perhaps a change in the constitution. The committee has discussed the possibility of a Catholic heritage trail, and the long one that has been awinding from Spey Bay in the last three newsletters is certainly linked to that idea. It would be very helpful to know people's views on this.

Publicity: Our President Mgr. Copland was interviewed on 'MacGregor's Gathering' in February and did very well, despite being addressed anonymously as 'John' throughout in a way which implied that the Scottish public was not yet ready to hear a priest speaking on radio. Perhaps you saw STV's Gaelic programme (with subtitles) about Highland Catholics. Scalan featured on 5th May and got £40 appearance money. An article appeared in Aberdeen's 'Press & Journal' on 27 January which emphasised Scalan as a place of religious reconciliation and showed those three stalwarts Bill McEwan, Jane McEwan and Bill Grant warmly clad in front of the new signboard. Finally your editor cobbled together a piece on Peter Anson's 1934 caravan quest to Glenlivet which really stirred the modern concern to save Scalan. It can be found in one or two select libraries in the March issue of 'Aberdeen Leopard'.

The Innes Review Members may be interested to know that the editor of *Scalan News* is now also the post1560 editor of the Scottish Catholic Historical Association's journal which is named after the historian Thomas Innes. Newsletters are newswy, so if the idea of another membership at the cost £14 a year appeals to you be warned! *The Innes Review* is serious historical business (not the sort of thing you can read over breakfast) but very good value for money at 80 pages every spring and autumn. Plans are afoot to make it still larger with a wider range of short articles. If you found it a little dry in the past you might like to try again. [Cheques to SCCHA, c/o The Treasurer, 196 Clyde Street, Glasgow G1 4JF.]

A highly successful SCRA conference on 500 years of the Archdiocese of Glasgow took place in that city's municipal building on 30 May, and the chance was taken to publicise Scalan. All the leaflets went. Fr Peter Moran of Blair's will have contributions in both of the 1992 IR issues based on his recent visits to France. One of these is about what happened to the library of the Scots College at Douai, on the French side of the Belgian border. What follows is a kind of outcut: a bit too exciting for the *Innes* but certainly linked with Scalan.

Escape from Douai

One of the last students at the Scots College Douai was Andrew Carruthers, a future bishop of the Lowland and Eastern Districts: 'He entered in the sixteenth year of his age the Scots College in Douai. In the course of the six years that he remained there he gave proof in the public schools of the University of that place of astonishing progress in the branches of literature and science. He was already well advanced in his theological studies when the terrible Revolution, which broke out in France in 1792, obliged him to abandon them for a time, and to make his escape along with others of his fellowstudents to his native land ... On his return to Scotland he was appointed Prefect of Studies at Scalan.'

Charles Gordon (the future 'Priest' Gordon of Aberdeen over half a century) also transferred to the Glenlivet seminary but he, by way of contrast, was the butt of school masterly jokes about 'want of quickness and accuracy'. Sarcasm came his way from the Rector after a correct repetition of the Lord's Prayer: young Gordon gave the credit to his 'mither'. He later became vicar general of Aberdeen in all but name (Bishop Kyle staying well clear at Presbome) and played a key role in the founding of Blair's College.

The Rev. Charles Farquharson had cause, as rector, to be irritable in the summer of 1790: 'Since the middle of May we are fairly at the mercy of the military: they hold courtsmartial, dismiss whom they please, insult openly their officers and clergy.' New laws passed by the Paris Assembly threatened Church institutions of all sorts.

The students, who had traditionally attended Douai University in distinctive clerical dress, were now withdrawn and tutored in the house.

By July 1792 they could not leave the building unless in secular dress and sporting the tricolour of the republican party. Andrew Scott (another bright student, who became Glasgow's first bishop) wrote home to the Btates of Enzie about 'the extraordinary expenses laid out in procuring us a new kind of dress, the Ecclesiastical habit which we formerly wore being now proscribed ... The king has as yet protected the unhappy clergy and hindered them from falling a prey to their enemies; but when he is no more they will be hunted like wild beasts and butchered wherever they are found.'

A few weeks later hundreds of clergy were massacred in their Paris prisons. War was declared between Britain and France and all British property at Douai was confiscated. In April 1793 eight students crossed the Channel on the first stage of their journey to Scalan: six of the eight were later sent to the Royal Scots College Valladolid after a few months in Glenlivet.

On 16th June Mr Farquharson and his four remaining students were ordered out of the house and of Douai itself. They spent that night in the village beside the college's country house and then headed for a Bruges convent which served as a gathering point for Catholic refugees. The students were soon out of the country in their turn, but Farquharson then went back towards Douai to meet servants who were carrying items of college property. Among these were the martyr portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, which is still at Blair's, and a reliquary containing the head of St Margaret. The latter left Scotland in 1597 and six years later reached Douai. It disappeared at this time and was never brought back to Scotland.

Farquharson also disappeared for two months, paying a visit to Alexander Innes, rector of the Scots College in Paris, who had escaped the guillotine at the last minute owing to the overthrow of Robespierre which brought the Reign of Terror to an end. Back in Douai, Farquharson was fortunately out of town dining with a farmer when the town gates were closed by decree, 'so that none of us might escape ... Most luckily for me, I previously sent off all my boys, for if one of them had been arrested I must have stayed.' Students from the English college as well as nuns from English convents were held prisoner at Doufers, forty miles inland from Douai, until 1795.

From Our Readers

I am pleased beyond measure that at last some effective steps are being taken to preserve this lovely and holy place. While living for many years at Clochan in the Enzie, within a few hundred yards of Presbome, I spent much effort in trying to arouse interest in Scalan and in getting Presbome restored and brought back into use. Praise God the latter is now accomplished, and I am so very delighted that you are tackling the problem of Scalan. Judith Scott, Wymondham, Norfolk. I enclose a cheque for £5 for regular news of Scalan, which has interested me since my brother (who lives near Inverness) gave me a leaflet and told me about it last year. Mrs Kay Quigley, Greenock. I received Scalan News No. 3 today. Thank you very much each number gets better. Ann Dean, West Lothian, Inverness. Today I was so very pleased to receive 'Scalan News'. I am 'in arrears with my £5 subscription and therefore enclose a £10 note for two years. M. E. Norcliffe, Euston, London. On July the 4th this year (we could not make it on the 5th) my son and I visited the Scalan. We were most impressed with the improvements but found the inside very damp, which must have an adverse effect. While we were there about an hour we opened all the doors and in that short time the place dried out considerably. Mrs. Grace Ellis, Edinburgh. I have read in 'The Catholic Family' about the Scalan Association. I cannot tell you how delighted I was to hear of it. I have always been interested in Scalan and Morar and Aquorthies and Blair's through reading short lives of Bishop Hay and other 'heather priests' to think what we owe to the teaching there amid such odds and such frugality. My great grandmother came from quite nearby. Her mother was a Melzies from Duff town married to a Calder from Craigellachie and although their forebears had not been able to maintain the 'ancient faith' I know that the Menzies further east did (including the chiefs of the clan at Weem) but this couple lost it by the late 18th century. Perhaps one day I shall have the opportunity of visiting Scalan. Céline Leverage, Powis, Wales. When I started piecing my family tree together I had simply no idea how far back I would get. Should you meet any present day 'relative' of Abbe Paul MacPherson I would like to have their names and addresses. Bob Henderson, 4 Marsfield West, Inverurie. According to my research the Catholics of Banffshire in the early 1800s made up about a quarter of the population. In 1971 it had dropped back to about 4 per cent. Was this caused by the drift of the rural population to the cities? What was the relationship of the Gordon family to their Catholic tenants after the raising of the third Duke as a Protestant in the 1720s? Dennis Prentice, North Curl Curl, New South Wales.

[Briefly, the Catholic population of upper Banffshire in particular was rising in the early 1800s because of whisky, distilled in the Braes and smuggled to the cities until the excise officers and a lower price for grain whisky put a stop to it. Land cleared for barley was then abandoned and the population fell steadily. The second Duchess of Gordon took her children to the Protestant service within days of her husband's death in 1728, although the future third Duke had served mass at St Ninian's, Braes of Enzie, shortly before it. The ducal family continued to protect their Catholic tenants, and a tolerant, intermarrying style of Catholicism became a feature of the area. Ed.]

The Chisholm Trail Part 3: Tintinoul to Lismore

The stage from Tintinoul to Braemar is described by Sir Edward Peck (in his *Ayonside Explored*) in lyrical terms: 'This incomparable section of the Avon is a delight: steep slopes of birch and heather dominate creaming rapids, and the river flows through aquamarine pools and crystal reaches where multicoloured stones shimmer through the limpid water.' On a fine morning there are few routes which engender such a light heart; the going is easy, only 32 km to Braemar, but it would be a pity not to linger and enjoy the water, woods and wildlife. An overnight bivouac is possible just about anywhere en route, but the usual laws of courtesy should be observed near Inchnor and Invercauld House.

Leave Tintinoul by the road to the southwest at the high end of the village. There will shortly be a choice between following the road down to the river or taking the track which maintains height until Delavovar. The high road is better unless you want to explore the Ailnack

gorge. After the confluence of the Builg Burn and the Avon continue south to the east of Loch Builg, where in bad weather some shelter may be had at the ruined Lochbuilg Lodge. OS 36 shows two routes to the head of the Bealach Dearg: either may be taken. Continue south on to OS 1:50 000 43 and follow the estate road past Invercauld House to cross the Dee by Invercauld Bridge, and proceed to Braemar along the A93.

Anyone with the usual Scottish education (meagre, in terms of our Catholic heritage) is likely to associate Braemar with nothing more than highland games and royalty. It comes as a surprise to discover the strong Catholic tradition of the area. Christian missionaries came to the Braes of Mar in the 5th century, and the first church was built during the reign of the Pictish king Angus MacFergus. Its ruins are in the burial ground of Camusnakist near Braemar Castle, marked on OS 1:25 000 Pathfinder 255 and shown on OS 43 as a small enclosure on the left of the A93 just as it begins to swing right. With the spread of Christianity a number of chapels were built in the area, including the Chapel of the Seven Maidens at Inverry.

The faith sown during those centuries survived through penal times to the present day. Priestly ministry was intermittent and secret: a fluteplaying shepherd could well have been a missionary in disguise. From 1671 to 1788 Jesuits made the mission their own. Even within a strong Catholic community, priests chose discreet locations to live and celebrate public mass, until in 1795 it became possible to build a church in the village of Braemar. The Church of St Andrew on Chapel Brae served local families until 1839 and then became a Catholic school. In that year a fine new church was opened to maintain the tradition begun in Pictish times.

Since leaving Spey Bay we have crossed the paths of many heroic priests who made great sacrifices for the Faith. These missionaries lived under threat of the Penal Laws, worked in misery and poverty, and often died of persecution or privation. As one wrote: 'My food was barley bread, my drink cold water, my bed the hard ground.' Living the Faith does not appear to demand much heroism today: the symbolic slap at Confirmation is about as hard as it is going to get. Being a Catholic is thought to be a harmless eccentricity; after all, there is not much for the Church Militant to be militant about.

But there are Catholics and other Christians who think otherwise. They believe that there are moral issues about which it is necessary to be militant; they are willing to be imprisoned by a legal system which has no moral principles which cannot be changed by an Act of Parliament. These people know that they will be subject to physical violence from the political Hard Left, without protection of the law, and yet they persevere. If you walk up Chapel Brae to the old Catholic Church! School you will find such people at Humanae Vitae House. [Clearly these are Dr McNamee's personal views Ed.] If you want a cup of coffee or permission to camp in the grounds phone ahead (03397) 41380.

Leave Braemar by the Inverry road. About 3 km from the village between the road and the river, facing the Quoich Water where it

joins the Dee, are the ruins of the chapel which was used before 1795. This spot, unmarked on OS 43, is shown on OS 255 as Arderg. You will know you are there when you see a recess in the bank with a slab inscribed 'Father Charles Farquharson 1785', commemorating the last of the Deeside Jesuits. Cross the Ely Burn at Inverry and drink from Tobur Mhoire: it is remembered in local legend that Mary's Well was blessed by St Monire in the 9th century.

Proceed to the Linn of Dee and continue along the northern bank, crossing the river by the White Bridge. Swing to the south for perhaps 2 km before turning west along the Geldie burn. After about 5 km the track changes to a narrow path through open country: a fine heather track which takes the mind from thoughts of arriving to the pleasure of the moment. On a fine evening it is tempting to sleep under the stars at the waterfall on the River Eidart 27 km from Braemar, but there is no good ground for a tent. There is a fine two-storey bothy 9 km further on at Raighateachan.

The next stage is to Dalwhinnie, through the hills. From the bothy go on to the bridge and memorial and then double back, using the paths shown leading to the edge of OS 43 at NN 800 886; then transfer to OS 42. Cross the A11 Bhran at the weir and the River Tromie by the bridge. The route moves anticlockwise around Bophachioiche to pick up a track at NN 719 867 which, following the aqueduct, leads down to the A9 and Dalwhinnie.

It might be a good idea to have a parcel waiting for you there with fresh clothing, fresh maps, and any little treats you enjoy at the end of a hard day. Poste Restante (Dalwhinnie PO, Invernesshire PR19 1AB) is a reliable means of sending gear on ahead, but post offices tend to be closed more than they are open. A hotel, on the other hand, is open from early morning to late at night seven days a week. There are going to be no opportunities to reprovision between Dalwhinnie and Appin, and only one possible hotel, Kingshouse in Glencoe.

The route along the west shore of Loch Erchie is undemanding for the next 21 km and there is a good bothy at Benalder Cottage. In moving southwest from Dalwhinnie the Chisholm Trail skirts Lochaber, where Catholic practice was again strong in the penal period: see Dom Odo Blundell's *Catholic Highlands of Scotland*. From Benalder Cottage the route follows the path round to the northwest and then turns southwest to follow the Uigie Labhair down to Loch Ossian. An easy walk along the southern shore leads on to OS 41: and a unique youth hostel. From the hostel follow the path to the foot of Loch Treig, then turn southwest following the path to the western end of the Blackwater Reservoir, noting the monument shown on the map. It is possible to walk across the top of the dam without difficulty. This somewhat erratic route to the dam is suggested because there are tracks most of the way, but in good dry conditions you can take a more direct route.

The Kinlochleven Dam will convey more meaning if you know Patrick MacGill's *Children of the Dead End*. This is the story of an Irish labourer from Donegal who helped to build the dam. When MacGill laboured it was not as a diverting interlude from a literary career; it was his life, from which he escaped by writing. MacGill's talent took him to Windsor Castle as secretary to the Canon of St George's Chapel. An account of his life and work by Owen Dudley Edwards may be found in the *Innes Review* for autumn 1987. Before leaving the dam, visit the little cemetery and note the names: mixed Celtic, from Scotland and Ireland. The headstones are made of the same concrete as the dam.

The most direct route for the next stage is southwest to Altanacadh (on the A8) across boggy ground. If you prefer a drier, and more historic, route then take the track to Kinlochleven until it meets the Old Military Road, now part of the West Highland Way. You then climb a little before descending the Devil's Staircase to the A8. Kingshouse Hotel lies 4 km to the southeast: unfortunately not on the direct route through the Lairig Gartain. OS 41 makes the choice clear: 8 km through the pass to Dalness in Glen Etive, or 16 km of roadwalking, redeemed by the hospitality of the Kingshouse and a longer experience of the glen in which Deirdre and Naosí sought refuge from Conchubor: King of Ulster. Perhaps you will be fortunate enough, after Dalness (when you move on to OS 50), to find Loch Etive as welcoming as Deirdre did.

Loch Etive! O Loch Etive!

*Twas there I reared my first house

Loving its woods on rising;

A fold for sunshine is Loch Etive.

At Gualachulain turn northwest up the hill for about 300m following the boundary of the wood until it swings to the north. From that point head for Glen Ure and continue down to Glenure House: you will find easier going on the south bank of the river. Follow the path from there and track round to the A828 by way of Taravocan. Follow the main road around the north bank of Loch Crean on OS 49, past the inn at Creagan and then left on to the quieter road which meanders round to Port Appin. This ferry port has a hotel, post office and shops which will give the pilgrim a chance to buy supplies for the island. Walking through the mountains of Scotland, it is rarely necessary to carry much water. A clear burn is never far away, but not so on Lismore so carry extra water with you. There is a daily ferry service with times on display at the jetty.

Lismore must surprise the first-time visitor. The ground cover is fine turf on limestone rock; the view of Lochaber and Glencoe is dramatic; the history is long in the ecclesiastical life of Scotland. The gospel was brought to the island by St Moluag in the second half of the 6th century: the name Big Garden is supposed to have been given by the community in Iona. A tangible link with St Moluag is the *Bachull Mor*, his pastoral staff, which for many years was in the keeping of the Dukes of Argyll. The episcopal staff is back on the island and can now be seen in Bachull House.

There was a monastery on the island for many centuries with the Bishop of Argyll intermittently in residence. The cathedral of the Isles was founded around 1189; part of it survives in the structure of the parish church, which is 4 km down the spine of the island from the ferry. The former manse beside the church is now a guesthouse. An iron age broch, Castle

Tirefour, can be reached by a pleasant walk over the turf. You can then follow the coast down to Achnacroish, where there is a CalMac ferry to Ob an: but not every day. The 13th-century bishop's palace is at Achadun Castle, further south on the other side of the island.

The end of the pilgrimage is a final 2 km further on. At the farm of Kilcheran you will find the graves of the eponymous Chisholm brothers. [*Dr McNamee's 'Chisholm Trail' is named after them: now you know! Ed.] Bishops John and Aeneas Chisholm lie far from their birthplace in Strathglass, inland from Beaulieu. The graves are not hard to find, and when you ask at the farmhouse for permission to visit them you will be given clear directions.*

How two 19th-century Catholic bishops (and brothers) came to be buried here should interest readers of this newsletter. When Scanlan's masters and boys came down from the hills to Aquorthies the college of the Highland District at Samala man in Ffoidart was also closed. A merger was considered, but the two Districts (Gaelic and Scotspeaking) obtained their own seminaries a while longer. The Highland one moved to the fine house which you can see at Kilcheran. Purchased in 1801, the new college received its first students in 1803 and served as a junior seminary until 1828, when a merger was achieved at Blair.

For three decades the Gaelicspeaking college for the Highlands and Islands struggled on against financial difficulties, despite an attempt to achieve solvency by exploiting the local limestone. Oban is now the cathedral town for Argyll and the Isles, and Lismore, with its special atmosphere, has slipped into a backwater of history. Your pilgrimage will help to keep alive the memory of Catholic endeavour from the days of St Moluag to those of the Bishops Chisholm.

AMDG

David McNamee

Subscriptions: Mrs Jane McEwan, Ogilvie Cottage, Gallonhill, Glenlivet, Banffshire AB3 9DL. If you would like copies of the threefold brochure or of old newsletters, to spread the word in your locality, she now has them in abundance.

Correspondence: If you have a thought, a letter, a question, or even an article for this newsletter send it to Alasdair Roberts, Northern College, Aberdeen AB1 2RY.

If you would like to walk over to Scanlan from the Well of the Lecht on 5th July be there by 1 p.m. .