

Scalan News

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Bishop George Hay was consecrated bishop on Trinity Sunday 1769.

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the consecration as bishop of Rev. George Hay, which took place, in secret because of the Penal Laws, in the small upstairs chapel in The Scalan, which we can still visit today. He had been appointed to the position of Co-adjutor Vicar Apostolic of the Lowland District of Scotland, assistant to

Bishop James Grant, and he succeeded him when Bishop Grant died in 1778.

The Annual Scalan Mass in 2019 will be celebrated, not on the first Sunday of July, our standard date, but on Trinity Sunday, 16th June, at 4.00pm.

Bishop Hugh Gilbert OSB, Bishop of Aberdeen, and President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, has agreed to preach on this important occasion. Some of our other bishops have indicated they will also be present.

The Scalan News wishes all its Readers a Holy and Happy Easter Season.

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Subscriptions

According to our records, 167 people are up-to-date with their subscription. This will show on the front of your envelope as ‘18/19’, meaning you are not due to pay anything until the AGM in May 2019. Thirty-one people receiving this edition will see ‘17/18’ which means you paid up until the AGM of 2018. A few will have ‘16/17’ on their address label, and a smaller number will have ‘15/16’. The policy of the

Scalan Association is to remind you for three years and then to harass you no further. In truth, we are not particularly intent on recovering arrears. We would be more than happy to receive your subscription for the year ahead, telling us that you are on board again, and perhaps pay a further donation if you are able, as all members are encouraged to do each year. There are a few people who have paid ahead, even several years, until 2026 in one case.

Another policy of the Scalan Association has been, for several years now, to peg the subscription at £10, while asking those who want to give more to do so.

Our thanks to those who provided e-mail addresses for the purpose of saving money on paper, ink and postage in sending out the News. However, this has proved to be more complicated than it seemed at first, and has become even more problematical with recent European data protection laws. Some investigation and experimentation needs to be done before we find a secure and efficient way of doing this.

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“Secret Priest Training Site to be Restored”

It was reported recently that some restoration and preservation work was to be done on The Scalan. Actually, this refers to lottery money to be used on the agricultural buildings close to Scalan, (see photo on page 10) and not the Old College itself. We are responsible for some of these buildings (“up to the eaves”, according to the contract signed with the Crown Estates). There has been talk of money being available for signage within The Scalan itself, and we are confident that will happen in due course, but headlines such as “Secret Priest Training Site to be Restored” are simply inaccurate. Nobody contacted the Scalan Association about this news item, which could have been easily done by “googling” us on the internet.

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The Annual General Meeting

is due to take place on Tuesday 21 May 2019. This is a happy coincidence because this is the exact date when Bishop Hay was consecrated in The Scalan. It was decided to have the main celebration on Trinity Sunday since that is the (moveable) feast on which the event occurred, rather than our usual first Sunday of July.

The AGM is always preceded by Mass at The Scalan at 12.30pm, and the plan is to celebrate Mass in the small upstairs chapel where Bishop Hay was consecrated. The Bishop Hay chalice will be brought for this and the Mass on the 16 June. All are

welcome, and encouraged to begin the meeting with being present for this special Mass.

The Mass is followed by the meeting proper in the Braes Hall, Chapeltown of Glenlivet. Arrangements have been simplified, so that after serving teas and coffees, the meeting gets under way at 1.30pm and finishes by 3.00pm. Some people come quite a distance for the meeting and have a long road home. While the meal served previously was greatly appreciated, it did lengthen proceedings and that caused some anxiety to those who faced a long journey. All members are encouraged to attend the AGM and to bring with them whatever eatables they desire which can be consumed as the meeting gets underway.

One subject already on the agenda is the new proposed **Constitution of the Scalan Association**. The drafting of it has been a long-running affair, which met with a few interruptions on its way, but the local committee did a full session of work on it in early October, and more in April, so we are hopeful that the matter can be finalised at the AGM.

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Scalan Facebook and Scalan Website

The Scalan Facebook page has been running since the Annual Mass of the 300th Anniversary Year of Scalan's Foundation, 2016. A short video of that event was the first item on the page and it can still be viewed there, as well as another produced after last year's Mass. The page content has expanded over time to take in Scottish Catholic History generally, with which Scalan is inextricably linked, and of which the Scalan story is a proud part.

The Facebook address is www.facebook.com/1716Scalan1799

The Scalan website was established on 19 December 2017. On it you can look up past editions of the Scalan News from the first edition up to edition no. 54, the edition before this. Items going onto Facebook are normally posted on the website first and exported to the Facebook page. This will alert readers to the existence of the website. Since the website started it has, as of Wednesday 1st May 2019, received 3051 visitors. Please visit it and encourage others to do so at **www.scalan.net**

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Growth and Spread of the Christian Faith in Stratha'an (Part Two)

How Christianity spread in Stratha'an and who were the men responsible for this spread cannot be known now with any certainty; isolation meant evangelisation proceeded slowly and piecemeal in ways not easily recoverable. We can make inspired guesses and work back from better documented times but the hard fact is, we do not really know. Today we think all history can be found in books or sourced on the internet, so to have to admit that there are large gaps in what we know of our early Christian times is hard to accept.

The first missionaries, Picts of eastern Scotland, Scots from the west, or Irish from Iona, probably all three, first had to win the approval and interest of the local thanes. Once that very important step had been taken, they gathered round them groups of local people eager to learn about Christianity, to be baptised by them and to take part in the work of evangelization – the missionaries benefiting from their familiarity with the locality and people. Thanes, wishing to be generous supporters of the new religion, would give land for a small chapel for the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments. So what started in such a small tentative fashion spread slowly into Stratha'an.

We have been left with the names of some of the most revered missionaries of that time, known as saints only through popular local acclaim and not as now through the pronouncement by the pope. At first these holy men were remembered with great affection, if not the actual saints then the missionaries who *had* known them, been trained by them or sent out by them. The stories of their lives and achievements were told and retold but after several hundred years these memories became distorted, exaggerated and eventually almost forgotten. At that point the lives of the better known saints were recorded with the resultant fabulous stories we have today.

Between the 6th and the 8th centuries, many missionaries worked in north-east Scotland; so there is no one major evangelist. Among the best known Pictish saints are Drostan, known in Badenoch, Strathspey and Urquhart, Nathalan (Nechton) remembered at Tullich, on Deeside and Ternan, whose work spread as far as Uist and Benbecula. Erchard travelled the Great Glen, is remembered at Clova, Aberdeenshire and reached Strathglass in Inverness-shire. And then there is Fergus, the companion of Drostan and possibly the Fergan of *Tobair Fheargain* in Kirkmichael parish.

Some of the better known Celtic saints who either themselves worked in the north-east, or sent missionaries trained by them, are Moluag from Lismore, remembered at Clatt, Mortlach, Tarland and Rosemarkie. Maelrubha from Applecross is remembered

in Inverness-shire, Banffshire, Skye and Harris and Marnon with dedications at Aberchirder and Inchmarnock, was also known in the Moray area.

Ninian and Columba have not yet been mentioned. It is questionable how important these two were in the *initial* evangelization of the north-east of Scotland. Ninian (*Uinnian*) of Whithorn may have preached in the south-west of Scotland north to the Forth. Columba, the founder and abbot of Iona, was probably very influential in the training of the first missionaries but apart from the visit to a Pictish king near Inverness, evidence of his having been involved in missionary work in the north-east is lacking. The Scots take-over of Pictland in 894 resulted in the extinction of the Pictish language, and the favouring of the Celtic saints over the native Pictish ones.

By 1100 most of Scotland had territorial dioceses and episcopal rule; Stratha'an was in the diocese of Moray whose records were destroyed by the Wolf of Badenoch in 1390. With the creation of the diocese came its division into parishes, each parish served by its own church and priest instead of itinerant priests. In Stratha'an, St Peter's, Inveravon was made the 'mother church' and St Michael's, Kirkmichael a subsidiary church and both with graveyards. All the old small chapels became 'chapels of ease' still visited by the parish priest. To emphasise the universality of the Church, dedications were now to universal saints such as Peter, Paul and Andrew. Later, at a time when Scotland needed to lay emphasis on its nationhood, Columba and Ninian and a whole range of Celtic saints reappeared.

So much was lost at the time of the Reformation in 1560, but 156 years later, Scalan began the work of reclamation.

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Monsignor Robert Provost McDonald, RIP.

Mgr McDonald, who died on 14 March 2019, was a faithful member of the Scalan Association and a frequent attender at the annual Scalan Mass, when his Sunday duties allowed. The following homily was given by His Grace, Archbishop Conti, on the occasion of the Mass marking the Month's Mind of Mgr McDonald's funeral. The Mass was celebrated at St. Mary's, Fochabers, on 24 March.

On recent days we have been bathed in lovely sunshine, so appropriate for this season, Spring, which seems to mirror the Liturgy of Easter, a time of rebirth both in nature and in the Church. As today's Communion Antiphon says; "You are a people God claims as his own, to praise him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, Alleluia".

I am happy therefore that our Mass today, on the month's mind of Mgr. Robert's funeral Mass at Pluscarden, is of Easter, according to the rubrics. And knowing him, as well I did, he would regard it as right and fitting. He had a great love of the natural world which he photographed beautifully, and of the Church's Liturgy of which he forever found tender literary examples.

We speak constantly of God the Creator, but rarely of God the Artist, but creation is full of God's artistry, and there is such great artistry also in his daily Providence. Who but the consummate Artist would have arranged for Robert to be buried on his birthday, his ninetieth, on the Feast of Our Lady's Annunciation, at Pluscarden which he loved so well, with his sometime Deacon, Jacques, catching up with him, and the chants of the monks of that hallowed place honouring Our Lady, Notre Dame, whose Cathedral he knew so well in the Paris of his priestly formation? He once sent me a celluloid image of one of its great rose windows.

He wanted to be buried with his parents at Dufftown where he was born. Incredibly it was at its Cottage Hospital that he unexpectedly died. Dufftown is on the road to Scalan. It embraces Mortlach, from which the seat of the Diocese moved to the mouth of the Don in the early 12th century. The county of Banff produced the greatest number of priests and bishops to serve the Church in the post-Reformation period of its revival. It holds important memories for us.

I don't think anyone could better represent the corps of that devoted priestly band than Mgr. Robert, committed to his parishes, gentle in his pastoral care of the people, faithful in his diocesan duties and wholly dedicated to Our Lord. It is timely to recognise the contribution of our native priests, as, in these changing days, we acknowledge the gift of other nations in the pastoral care of the Scottish faithful.

In offering our sympathies to Sister Monica of the Society of the Sacred Heart at the loss of her brother, we recall Canon Bernard, sometime also parish priest of Fochabers. We count in the McDonald family two priests, a religious sister, and a married man with children, now also deceased, all admirable in their adherence to the Faith. We thank God for them and for their parents.

We are right to do so. St. Peter in addressing the crowds who gathered in the temple in the wake of the miracle of which he had been the agent, said "You are the heirs of the Prophets, the heirs of the Covenant God made with our ancestors when he told Abraham: in your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed".

We are called in every generation to be witnesses. In addressing the apostles after his resurrection Jesus makes this clear. His death and resurrection were fulfilments of what had been promised through the prophets. He said: “You are witnesses to this”. We can take comfort in the thought that witnesses have not been lacking! We need to embrace consciously this witness status ourselves!

Bishop Gilbert in his homily at Robert’s funeral alluded to something I had said in the past when describing the scope of his ministry, for it had struck me that this priest from the old heartland of the Diocese had delineated its boundaries in the parishes he served.

Returning from Paris from Saint Sulpice to which he always referred with affection Fr. Robert was, following his ordination in 1952, appointed to St. Peter’s in Aberdeen. This parish is on the most easterly boundary of the Diocese. It is also the oldest city parish of the post Reformation Catholic Church in Scotland – if I am not mistaken - well before Catholic Emancipation, and made famous by Priest Gordon in the 19th century. Robert spent four years there learning the tricks of the trade, as he might have said.

From there he was sent North to Orkney and was two years in the Kirkwall outpost, before being swung round by episcopal dictat to Dornie, the only parish on the Western boundary of the Diocese and one of the very few on the mainland of the country where Gaelic was still spoken. It is what remained of a Catholic enclave for which a parish was established in 1703. Such was its poverty it was 57 years before parishioners got their parish church. Fr. Robert was eight years there, cared for by a housekeeper whom he always praised for her devotion (and I think her capacity to make ends meet!).

Then in 1966 he got his break and came home to the heart of the Diocese at St. Sylvester’s in Elgin, which had a convent of Sisters of Mercy founded ironically from a convent in Dornie with a rather short history. Its rather larger patron was a Catholic Duchess of Leeds. At Elgin it was the 3rd Marquis of Bute who was the aristocratic benefactor of both Greyfriars Convent and Pluscarden Abbey. Fr. Robert loved and was loved there from 1966 to 1995, 29 years in all. It was during that time that a young bishop was appointed to the Diocese and saw in Robert the ideal priest to act as Diocesan Treasurer.

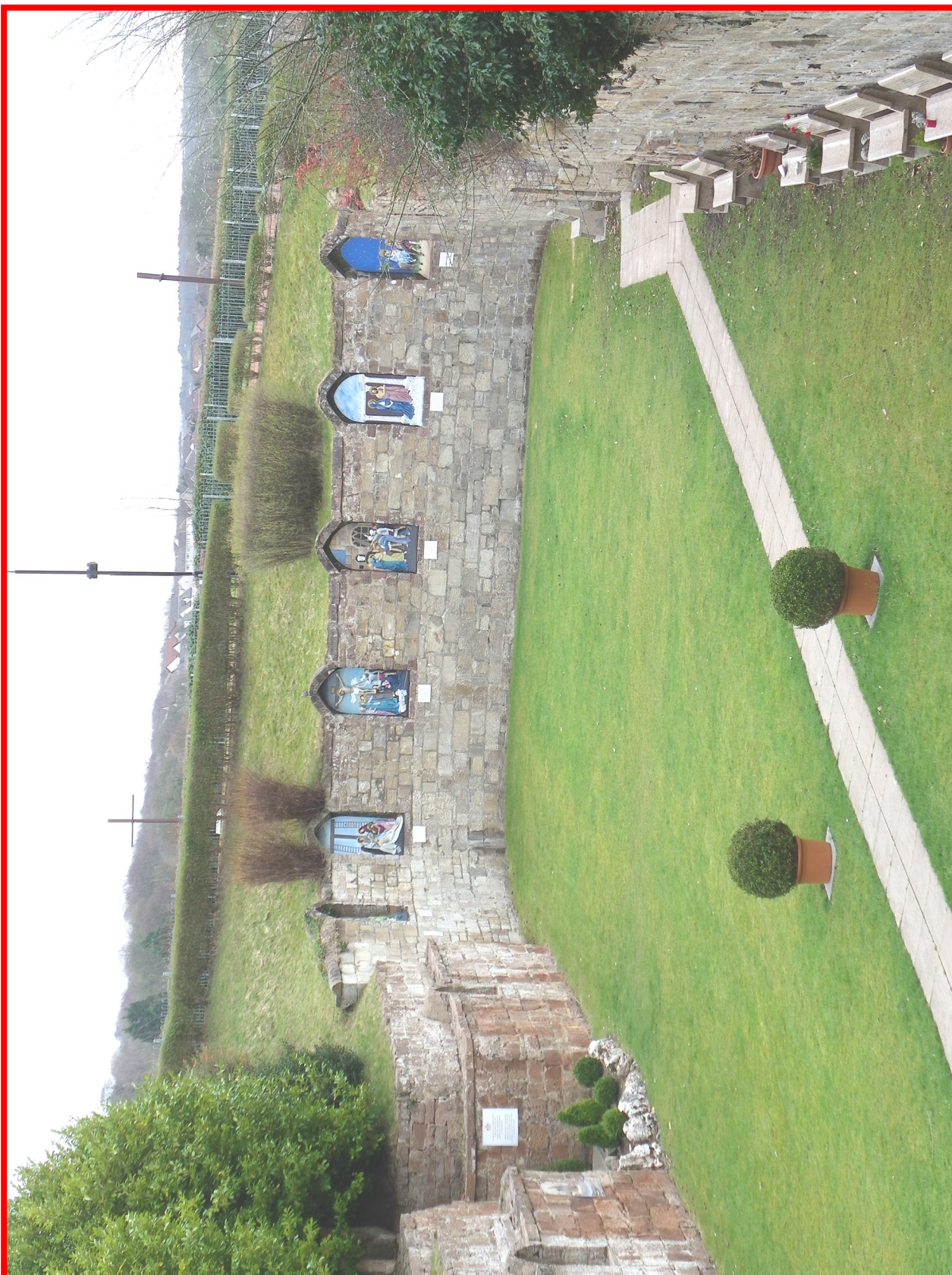
Thereafter, as all of you will probably know, Fr. Robert, having in the meantime been created a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter, and Dean, was transferred to St. Mary’s Inverness for another period of fruitful priestly ministry, until his retirement to



Monsignor Robert McDonald on the left
with some “weel-kent” Scalán members
after the AGM Mass in June 2008.



Some of the agricultural buildings, close to Scalan, mentioned on page three.



The site of the new Scalan Altar at Carfin Grotto, with the backdrop of some of the bas-reliefs of the Seven Dolours of Our Lady. They and the whole area have recently been completely renovated. See the article on page thirteen.

Greyfriars Convent

An enduring story of faith and fortitude



Anne Oliver

Fochabers in 2006. Now in the Autumn of his life, a domestic prelate, an honorary Chaplain to His Holiness the Pope, one might say he was “laden with honours”. But he was also burdened with ill health in these latter years, from which the Lord has now mercifully released him. He was kindly cared for by many who are here today.

Let us praise the Lord who has called him “out of darkness into his own marvellous light”. May he rest in peace.

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Scalan Altar at Carfin Grotto

Plans are well under way to have a “Scalan Altar” at Carfin Grotto, Scotland’s National Catholic Shrine. There are already altars and plaques to honour the Irish, Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian contribution to Scottish Catholicism. I thought it was time to commemorate the native Scots who kept the Faith through thick and thin for well over 250 years and also produced the priests who were needed to serve the Catholic Highlanders who migrated to the lowland towns and cities after 1790 and the Irish immigrants who came about the same time. The secret seminary at Scalan is a worthy representative of the efforts and suffering for the Faith by the Catholics of the Enzie, Lochaber, Strathglass, Barra and South Uist, and parts of Galloway just to name a few honourable place-names which every Scots Catholic should know and revere. The altar will be situated with a backdrop of bas-reliefs which depict the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, all recently restored. (See the photo on page 11.) Both Bishop Toal of Motherwell Diocese, faithful Scalan member and former office-bearer, and Fr. McGachey, Rector of the Grotto, have been very supportive of this project. A stone from the original Scalan house will be embedded in the altar top as the altar-stone; a plaque will give the Scalan dates (1716-99) on the front of the altar; and information boards will also be prepared.

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“Greyfriars Convent: An Enduring Story of Faith and Fortitude”

Mrs Anne Oliver has produced a book on the history of the Greyfriars Convent in Elgin, now home to Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia, who originate in Nashville, Tennessee. His Grace, Archbishop Conti, provided the following preface to the new publication:

Anne Oliver has invited me to provide a Preface to her book on Greyfriars Convent, Elgin, my home town. I am delighted to do so since I believe this unique restoration of a late mediaeval Franciscan Friary in Scotland has long deserved an accessible historical account. This is so, not only because of the building, a fairly rare survival of

anything medieval in Scotland, but also on account of the communities which have inhabited it both before and after the Scottish Reformation.

Among the lovely frescoes by Giotto adorning the Basilica which houses the mortal remains of St. Francis in Assisi is one showing the saint shoring up the Lateran Basilica in Rome, the Cathedral of the Popes, called the “The Mother and Head of all the churches of the City and of the World”. We see Pope Innocent III (Lothario dei Conti) in his bed in full pontificals dreaming of the Poverello, the poor man, Francis, who has accounted to him the experience he had as he knelt before the great cross at San Damiano in Assisi and heard the Lord say to him, “Rebuild my Church”.

Great was the influence of Francis and his followers in the restoration of piety among the faithful, the living stones of the Church, in the 13th century, following the Fourth Lateran Council over which Pope Innocent presided.

It is a representation of that beautiful crucifix of San Damiano which crowns the Rood Screen of Greyfriars Chapel, and how appropriately in a church built in the closing years of the 15th century by the followers of St. Francis, and restored in the latter years of the 19th after the disruption of the Reformation.

Anne Oliver narrates this history with engaging clarity at a new moment in the restoration of the Catholic Church in Scotland following its perilous survival in the so-called penal days of the 17th and 18th centuries when the Mass was banned, priests were expelled abroad and all recourse to the Holy See was forbidden. The French Revolution shook up the country, a Relief Act was grudgingly passed to ensure the loyalty of the Catholic Community, and eventually in 1829 Catholic Emancipation granted. Already in the North-East, where in the Enzie district of lower Banffshire a veritable nursery of priests existed, chapels such as Tynet (1755), disguised as a sheep cote, and Preshome (1788), manifestly a Church, pointed the way to a building programme that was to cover the whole country, and in places like Glasgow provide a welcome to the largely Catholic Irish immigrants of the early 19th century.

In the providence of God there were at this time new religious orders such as the Sisters of Mercy (Elgin 1861), the Sisters of Nazareth (Aberdeen 1862), and the Society of the Sacred Heart (Aberdeen 1895) to help with the rebuilding of the Catholic community, and generous benefactors from within the surviving or resurgent Catholic nobility such as the Frasers of Lovat and the Stuart Marquises of Bute, to provide or restore churches (St. Mary’s, Eskdale 1826) and Greyfriars (Elgin 1896). It is of this latter that Anne Oliver has written.

Greyfriars convent and its lovely chapel can stand as a metaphor of the survival and revival of the Catholic faith in the North-east of Scotland, and indeed further afield, a re-evangelization which is occurring with the advent of priests from abroad and new religious congregations in Aberdeen, Inverness and at Greyfriars itself (not forgetting of course the 1948 advent, a return to Moray, of the Benedictines at neighbouring Pluscarden, from which community the present Bishop of Aberdeen happily hails).

Where once native Scottish Franciscans chanted the Divine Office, and then Scottish and Irish Sisters of Mercy, one hears the voices of American Dominican sisters. And from this same cloister, consecrated members of the Church go forth joyfully with the message of the Gospel. It is a marvellous story and we are indebted to Anne for its present telling. What Giotto painted in colours Anne describes in words. Our imagination is furnished, and our hopes upbuilt. Praise the Lord!

“Greyfriars Convent: An Enduring Story of Faith and Fortitude” costs £10. The author offers it to Scalan members at a special price of £7 (plus £1 p&p if required). You can order it from Mrs Anne Oliver, 12 King Street, Elgin, IV30 1EU, or you will be able to buy copies at the Scalan Mass on 16 June.

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Bishop George Hay

George Hay was born in 1729, a hundred years before Catholic Emancipation brought the Penal Laws to an end in Britain and Ireland. He is known for having led Scotland's Catholics most of the way. That should always be true, but this year is special. Hay was consecrated as coadjutor vicar apostolic (deputy bishop) of the Lowland District at the seminary of Scalan in Glenlivet on Trinity Sunday 1769. In 2019 that first Sunday after Pentecost falls on 16 June. The annual Scalan Pilgrimage Mass, celebrating 250 years, should be very well attended.

Growing up in Edinburgh George Hay heard no good of ‘popery’, but his father was a non-juring Episcopalian Jacobite. As a medical student when Prince Charles Edward brought his Highlanders to town, George tended the wounded after Prestonpans. The sixteen-year-old then followed the Prince (and his professor as chief surgeon) to Derby and back. Having left the army he expected leniency for a non-combatant, but spent fifteen months in custody at Edinburgh Castle and then London.

Towards the end of that time George Hay began to be attracted to Catholicism by

Thomas Meighan, a prison-visiting bookseller in Drury Lane. Back in Scotland, staying at a relative's house near Kilbride, he read *Papist Misrepresented, and Represented* by John Gother. In spiritual crisis, Hay prayed for guidance. He found his fencing-master John Gordon 'of Braes' (Glenlivet?) was a Catholic, and this led to instruction by a Jesuit. George Hay was received into the Church of Rome at the age of nineteen.

Studies completed, the young man found himself barred from practising medicine: no Catholic doctors under the Penal Laws. He took a post as ship's surgeon but paused in London. There he came under the influence of Bishop Richard Challoner, and with the approval of Bishop Smith in Edinburgh was accepted for the Scots College Rome.

Two others preceded him. A day short of fifteen when he sailed, John Geddes had started Latin at seven and was brought to the required standard by the well-named John Godsman at Preshome near Buckie. William Guthrie who joined him there was a convert who had been an apprentice joiner at Ellon. Geddes took him to the ruined chapel of St Ninian's in his native Braes of Enzie. The contrast with Catholic Europe struck Guthrie vividly at Gibraltar:

‘As it is the first Catholic Church
that I ever was in, I cannot express how much I was struck with amazement to see the Altars so finely adorned with most amiable Pictures, which I should think might move a heart of stone and excite it to devotion. In a word I found now, to my sweet experience, as I have the pleasure of being an eye-witness, that the way the Catholic Church was represented to me, before I was a Catholic myself, was nothing but raillery and aspersion.’

George Hay would have been similarly affected. This was a time when the Catholic Church in Scotland was at its lowest ebb, with priests in short supply. At the Scots College Hay and Geddes became soul-mates in religion. The classes which they attended with students of many nations were easy for them. Finally Hay, Geddes and Guthrie, newly ordained, left for Scotland in 1759.

John Geddes was sent to the Cabrach, the ‘Siberia of Scotland’, while William Guthrie suffered even colder winters in Glenlivet. George Hay shared a room at Preshome with Bishop James Grant. Both men travelled to scattered Catholic communities – for Hay see Ann Dean's article in June 1998 *Scalan News* no. 16, at www.scalan.net. He had work enough in the civil parish, as shown by my ‘Catholics in Rathven, 1762’. The names and homes of 440 Easter communicants can be consulted at 18 King Street, Aberdeen, headquarters of North-east Scotland's family

history society.

Worship away from Preshome took place (often after dark) in barns and corn-drying kilns. Meanwhile Hay set about restoring St Margaret of the Craigs, destroyed by redcoat soldiers. On one occasion there was a rush into hiding, until a member of the congregation was seen approaching in his new red waistcoat. Hay replaced the roof, then moved to something better: 'I have got my chapel now put in good order; my altar is up, and pleases. The seats are to be put in next week. The money I will raise through a cess on the seats.'

Hay was consecrated by Bishop Grant at Scalan in the presence of two Highland bishops. The ceremony took place in the upstairs chapel where he liked to begin his day in lengthy prayer. The building was quite new. Geddes had come across from the Cabrach to take charge of the seminary and he raised the first 'white house' in Glenlivet. It acquired a reputation for excellence, with a good library. Hay contributed several books written by himself, starting with *The Sincere Christian* (1781). These continued to be influential, not least in the Scots colleges abroad. For Hay, beset by headaches, the seminary came to feel like the Patmos of St John: 'I never was happier since I came to the mission than I am at Scalan. . .'

In 1778 Hay was lobbying at Westminster when the government agreed to relax anti-Catholic legislation. Highland soldiers were wanted for America, but it was an English Relief Bill which passed without difficulty. Hay advised holding back until after the Kirk's General Assembly, but the possibility of relief for Scotland led to angry debate. That generated 'Friends to the Protestant Interest', often in places where the Catholic presence was very slight. A couple of dozen Highlanders, new to Glasgow, gathered for prayer in the home of a MacDonald comb-maker. When a mob wrecked it the *Scots Magazine* told readers: 'Some poor Highland women had their cloaks and caps torn off them and were pelted with dirt and stones.' An Irish Relief Bill passed long before any of that nation reached the city.

Aberdeen's chapel in the Castlegate was also threatened, but it was Edinburgh which endured the worst that bigotry could do. Hay took up residence at Chalmers' Close off the High Street. It also served as a chapel, but he soon realised that the same double function could be achieved (with more space) at Blackfriars Wynd where Bishop Smith had lived. The 'older chapel-house' in that street was given over to Gaelic-speakers attended by the priest Robert Menzies. Two colleagues at dinner in the new one took refuge with Menzies when the mob threatened. The house's several floors were set on fire with buckets of tar for fuel.

George Hay returned from London after the Scottish Bill was withdrawn in February, and ‘oddly enough arrived in Edinburgh at the very time that the flames were devouring his new chapel. . . At last he stopped an old woman near the foot of Blackfriars Wynd and asked her what it all meant. “Oh sir,” she replied, “we are burning the Popish Chapel, and we only wish we had the Bishop to throw into the fire.”’ Hay took refuge in the Castle. Municipal money was granted in part compensation (lost books irreplaceable) and fourteen years later a Relief Act was passed for Scotland. Protestant relations no longer had first rights to heritable property, and the £100 for bringing about a priest’s arrest was no more.

Cecil Kerr did well to produce *Bishop Hay* (1927) as a slim volume out of *Scoticchronicon*’s 645 pages in small font, with fully two-thirds of them about Hay and his times. Long letters – John Geddes the principal correspondent – provide rich evidence for historians. The original documents can be consulted in Aberdeen University Library, but Ann Dean’s assiduously compiled index eases the way in through the published version.

Lady Kerr was highly respectful of Bishop Hay, but she acknowledged that he had fierce critics among the clergy. This was not about his resistance to music in what had been threatened chapels, but rather about money. Like most historians (including *Innes Review* Catholic ones) she ignored the subject. For long periods Hay was his own Procurator or money organiser for the Mission. There was misfortune during the French Wars with Paris investments lost, and lesser good fortune in the form of English support through Bishop Challoner. What George Hay achieved was the transformation of a Church reliant on Rome for annual clergy ‘quotas’ into one with careful investments made through Scottish banks. He also left a Church which looked to the laity for seat rents and collections.

Government aid was prompted by the loss of Scots colleges abroad, and a new seminary was opened at Aquhorties near Inverurie. It was great advance on Scalan, and had to be because all a future priest’s education (up to the canonical age of twenty-three) took place there. The neighbouring estate of Fetternear belonged to the Catholic Leslies, and when Hay came to live in the new seminary he baptised several of their children. His last years to 1811 are fully set out in *Scalan News* 19 and 20.

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A portrait of Bishop Hay in later life,
courtesy of the Blairs Museum.

