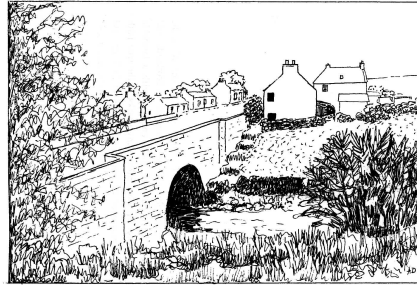


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Scalan News

No 26, May 2003

@Alasdair Roberts



The Annual General Meeting of the Scalan Association takes place on Tuesday 10 June, starting with Mass inside the Old College at 12 noon. Information about that, along with Father Michael Briody's report (as Secretary) on the 2002 AGM, is on the accompanying sheet. Jane McEwan estimates current membership as well into the 700s (Scalan News goes out to 648 addresses) most of whom cannot get to the Braes of Glenlivet on a weekday. Thanks is therefore due from the many to the few who are able to make it, and who make decisions on behalf of us all.

The Annual Mass is always held on the first Sunday of July, and almost always in the open in front of the Scalan seminary. Once, memory recalls, it was so wet that the Braes church at Chapeltown was used instead. So, again to repeat Fr Briody's sheet (Scalan News serving as 'a journal of record'!) the Mass will take place at 4 p.m. on Sunday 6 July. For those who have not been recently – or at all – cars but not buses can get quite close to the site by way of a solid field above the deeply rutted track. For those who prefer to walk, there is a car park at Eskmulloch. Several hundred people usually attend.

This issue of the magazine is notable for containing two lengthy articles on family history. 'The Michies of Badenyon' is by a Glenlivet exile in Canada who is related by marriage to committee member Gordon McGillivray. The back cover map shows Badenyon (stress on 'yon') in Glenbuchat, across the Ladder Hills from Glenlivet. Ann Dean has been asked for fewer drawings in this issue, but the family tree which takes up two centre pages is a work of art.

Thanks are due once more to Mrs Sutherland and the pupils of Lady Lovat Primary School in Morar for packaging and posting Scalan News. The children, some as young as eight, organise themselves into a production line - much jollier than a factory - proving that 'Many hands make light work.' Some are in the school's Gaelic Medium Unit, others are 'mainstream', but the focus on labels, stamps, envelopes, etc. crosses all barriers. There has to be a connection - 'up there' - with the fact that early in May a group of children from Huntly made their annual visit to Fr Colin Stewart's St Michael Centre in Tomintoul. With practical help from the party's artist, AD again, they made kites – and flew them over Scalan!

The picture opposite shows a hidden chapel at Strichen, and goes with a remarkable article about the family and priests who used it. As promised on the AGM sheet, here for £5 subscribers - new and old - is the Treasurer's address:

Mrs Jane McEwan, Ogilvie Cottage,
Gallowhill, Gellenlivet,
BALLINDALLOCH AB37 9DL.

The Bishop Looks at His Diocese

*This is the title of a 1952 **Innes Review** article by the Rev. James K. Robertson (1899-1973) a convert from Inch in Aberdeenshire who was the last priest to live at Preshome. There he presided over archival material which had been collected by Bishop James Kyle (1788-1869). Strictly speaking Kyle was Vicar General of the Northern District and titular bishop of Cybistra 'in partibus infidelium', i.e., the diocese of Cybistra was no longer Christian.*



The article showed Kyle at 40, newly appointed in 1829 and coping with the 'Muckle Spate' which swelled rivers and destroyed bridges as he carried out a visitation of his territory as far as Kintail on the west coast. Fr Robertson gave due attention to Glenlivet, and wrote of the Abbé Paul Macpherson: 'Perhaps the feature of his life that most intrigues the general student is the ease with which he managed to keep one foot in the courts and salons of the great world, and the other on his native peat mosses. There is a pleasant realism about that. No doubt he was better adapted by tastes and talents for the ways of high diplomacy, but there was no affectation about the interest he had in his Catholic countrymen of the Braes, for whom he built their first church and school.'

*That comparison introduces the farewell which Bishop Mario Conti paid to the Aberdeen diocese in 2002. The extracts are from his **Oh Help! The Making of an Archbishop** (Black & White, £9.99) They are chosen with 'native peat mosses' in mind rather than 'the courts and salons of the great world', to which Archbishop Conti now has even greater access. The book takes diary form, starting here the day after his interview with the Papal Nuncio.*

Friday, 11 January

I came back last night from London and I drive up today to celebrate a mass of thanksgiving at Buckie. The parish priest, Mgr Eddie Traynor, my vicar general, has recovered marvellously from what seemed a terminal illness. The church at Buckie, with its twin spires, was clearly inspired by the plan of Elgin Cathedral, once the seat of the Bishops of Moray. When St Peter's, Buckie, was built a few years before St Mary's Cathedral in Aberdeen, it was half expected that it might eventually, on the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy, be the cathedral of the diocese. *[Bishop Kyle, based at Preshome, was the son of an architect and donated the plans.]*

Saturday, 12 January

I set off for Aberdeen, calling in, en route, to see Mgr John Copland, the former vicar general. After a long struggle with cancer, he is now in the Keith Cottage Hospital. I sense it will be my last meeting with him. He is being well cared for and I leave comforted on that score, though saddened to see his deterioration in health.

Insofar as I am now on my journey to Glasgow, it seems appropriate that I should be starting it from the Braes of Enzie, the area from which so many post-Reformation priests came, some of whom became vicars apostolic. . . Among them was Andrew Scott, whose chapel on the banks of the Clyde is to become my new cathedral church.

Tuesday, 12 February

A sad interlude in these generally happy days. My vicar general of many years, Mgr John Provost Copland – a son of the Banffshire soil and as sound and fruitful as the land from which he came – has died. He is buried today after mass at St Thomas', Keith, at which I preside. A Keith 'loon', Fr Andrew Mann, gives the moving homily. It seems, in some ways, a fitting time for us to part but one that is nevertheless saddening – the end of an era. I leave his grave with a deep sense of loss – of a man, of a dying culture, of a depopulating community in the Braes of Glenlivet.

Wednesday, 13 February

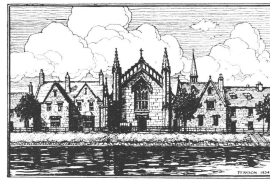
Today is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent, a season that will start for me in Aberdeen and end in Glasgow. I say mass for the children of St Joseph's School *[neighbours at Queen's Cross, Aberdeen]* and am presented with a beautiful memento from them. It comes in the form of a statue of St Joseph and the child Jesus in bronze resin by Anne Davidson. . .

Saturday, 16 February

This is my last confirmation of the children in the diocese, at St Margaret's, Forres. In nearly twenty-five years up and down its lovely land, I have confirmed virtually every Catholic child who has received the sacrament. Such confirmation occasions have been among the happiest and, I believe, most fruitful exercises of my ministry as a bishop. Parents, grandparents, friends and parishioners have stood in support of these youngsters as they professed the faith handed down to them. . .

Sunday, 17 February

From Forres, I go to Inverness, capital of the Highlands, with its own distinctive character both as a civic community and as a church. . . I am fond of Inverness,



the place where my grandparents married and my father was born. I have the shield of Inverness, containing the image of the crucified Christ, adorning the chalice which my mother's family gave me on my ordination day, 6 October 1958, at San Marcello al Corso in Rome.

I'm here today for the last time as bishop-administrator and receive a warm welcome from my devoted colleague and friend, Mgr Robert McDonald, parish priest of St Mary's Inverness. As I did a few days earlier at St Mary's Cathedral, I inscribe, in what is called the 'Book of the Elect', the names of those adult converts who are seeking membership of the Catholic Church – through baptism, a profession of faith, confirmation and communion. Afterwards I stand at the end of the aisle by the open door which looks on to the swiftly flowing River Ness to bid goodbye to the parishioners. Over the years, I have come to know them well – their good wishes ring in my ears for the rest of the day. . .

Friday, 22 February

Last night I took canonical possession of the Archdiocese of Glasgow and was installed as its archbishop. While all this is going on, the College of Consultors of the Diocese of Aberdeen met and elected a new administrator of the diocese, Canon Peter Moran of Inverurie – a member of the Finance Committee and a long-standing friend and colleague. We had gone to Rome together as students in 1952, he from Glasgow and I from Aberdeen, and it is an extraordinary irony that he is now to be Administrator of Aberdeen and I of Glasgow. . .

Thursday, 4 July

A joyful day at Pluscarden Abbey. . . I ordain Tony Schmitz, the Director of the Ogilvie Institute, to the permanent diaconate. My personal satisfaction is not only in seeing a good friend achieve his ambition but in recognising that, in him, two of my own endeavours come together – namely the restoration in Aberdeen of the permanent diaconate and the foundation

of the Ogilvie Institute as an agency of faith development in conjunction with the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham. . .

In the evening Mgr Robert and I are honoured by the Abbot and community of Pluscarden in what they call a '*Gaud-eamus*' (literally, 'let us rejoice'). It is great to see this body of men, whose lives are entirely dedicated to the Benedictine idea of prayer and work (*ora et labora*), enjoying some innocent fun with songs and sketches – occasionally at one another's expense – while consuming sticky buns, boxes of chocolates, beer and Coke in front of the great fireplace of the Chapter Room. . .

Friday, 5 July

I'm dictating this in the garden of Pluscarden Abbey at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. For a change it's pleasant enough to be sitting out – cloudy, but with moments of sunshine and a gentle, if somewhat cool breeze.

Tomorrow I go to Tynet and then on to Portsoy to celebrate Fr Ronnie Walls' silver jubilee. He was the first priest I ordained when I became Bishop of Aberdeen. [*For his progression from 'the manse to the Mass', see **The One True Kirk**, 1960.*] And then it's on to Scalán for the annual mass at the old seminary in Upper Banffshire. Arguably, the survival of the Catholic Church in Scotland would not have been secure without that hidden seminary. . .

If one lead from Glasgow takes us into the many parts of Ireland from which so many immigrants came in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the other lead takes us to the lands of Banffshire, to the west Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland. It is on these intertwined threads, like the woven green and gold cord on which hangs the bishop's pectoral cross, that the Church in Glasgow depends historically. After Scalán I go to Aberdeen, where I will be arranging my final 'flit'. These days are full of nostalgia.

College des Ecossois, Paris

24th April 2003

'Mass to mark the 400th Anniversary of the death of Archbishop James Beaton of Glasgow on 24th April 1603 and the second foundation of the Scots College, Paris.' Thus began the order of service, inside a cover displaying the book-plate of the College.

This event followed the 'Scots Colleges in Catholic Europe' exhibition which recently ran for sixteen weeks in Edinburgh's City Arts Centre. Alastair Cherry of the Scalán Association (and the National Library of Scotland) had prepared a history which was used for Paris. It ended: 'The Scots College, Paris is part of a continental tradition that shares with the Colleges in Rome and Salamanca as well as the former College at Douai and the Monasteries of Erfurt, Ratisbon and Wurzburg a service to the proclamation of the Gospel. Such is the tradition that

is being celebrated this night in Paris in the presence of the Scottish bishops and clergy as well as friends from the continent. May it continue for the next four hundred years.'

Prominent among twenty-two priests there were Archbishop Keith O'Brien and Archbishop Mario Conti who, as successor to the last pre-Reformation Archbishop of Glasgow, gave the homily. Three other bishops were on the altar, and a place of honour was reserved for Canon Brian Halloran as the historian of the College. One other Scalan Association member caught the



eye of someone in the congregation who had met Canon Peter Moran as an 'oil wife' in Aberdeen – Mme Catherine Horlin. Fr Peter conducted a regular *messe française* at Blairs. He has also contributed to the history of the institution which took students from Scalan, having found his way in summer 1991 to the Scots College farm at Grisy. Catherine and her husband were at the wedding of our daughter Laura Roberts, herself an oil wife in Paris (and mother of energetic pre-schoolers – too busy to attend) as Mme Laura Aboutaj. Catherine wrote:

'It was a very grand occasion, with representatives from the Franco-Scottish Society and the Caledonian Society as well as all the clergy. Secretary of State Helen Liddell spoke well afterwards at the *vin d'honneur* and there was a photo session in the courtyard of the College, under trees. We were very pleased to meet with our old friend Peter Moran who is in some ways part of the family. Three years ago he married our daughter in France, and then last August led the funeral service of my father-in-law. He likes to come and spend time with us in Brittany, where we have a house on a little island.'

It is pleasant to think of Canon Moran in such a setting, particularly during the fifteen months that he has been working more conscientiously than ever as Administrator of the Aberdeen diocese. He wrote recently about Blairs nicknames in Scalan News ('The Blairs Pyke', ScN 23) so it is interesting to learn from the memoirs which follow - 46-page illustrated booklet, price £3, phone David Taylor at the Blairs Museum 01224 863767 - that he too had a nickname.

Blairs College

Peter Gorman

Many years ago I promised myself I would write a short history of the college. Over the years family, business and finally teaching took up most of my days. Now, with retirement in full operation, I have taken the opportunity of fulfilling that promise. *[The extracts may suggest a comparison between student life at Scalan and Blairs.]*

Always there prevailed a very strong sense of discipline, partly self-imposed. At the end of the

school day, after tea in the afternoon, the boys would make their way to the study hall to do their 'homework'. This study hall was a place of silence and any person who broke this studious silence would find himself on report and in line for some form of punishment; detention or lines. To remind students of the rules, every Sunday they were read aloud, with notification of punishments. Occasionally a boy would be expelled, known as 'shying out', but mainly there would be punishments of a less severe type. Often, a semi-suppressed giggle could sound as the name of a more scholarly or sensible boy was announced, as on the occasion when one second former was punished for punching a classmate - who was sitting in the hall with a massive 'shiner'. This punching was known as 'laying on of hands'!

Around the hall were raised desks at which sat the prefects, known as Censors, and these senior students had the responsibility of ensuring silence and good behaviour during the communal period of work. At the front on a raised platform sat two senior boys, the head prefects. They were called the Decano and Sub-Decano. Here in splendid isolation and silence everyone studied to a greater or lesser degree until the bell sounded.

At least three afternoons during the week would see the boys outside, walking or playing football in periods known as 'allouts' – even when the weather was only slightly less inclement than blizzard conditions. Staff on occasion would join in with top form pupils, and no quarter was asked or given. In one game two known hard tacklers clashed, and the prof suffered a broken leg. This hard student defender is now (2000) a parish priest in Glasgow. Cross country runs up through the fields and woods were enjoyed by some. First back got the hottest water! In winter sledging would be allowed down 150 yards from the top of the field. At the end of the run snow often drifted to the height of the wall, and braver spirits would attempt to clear it, crossing the lane to come down in the lower field.

Blairs had its own peculiar language. 'Luggy' was any sweets or chocolate, and 'luggy parcels' were welcome at any time. The 'jakes' were the toilets. If a boy was accused of 'bealing' it meant that he was in a sulk. A new student was a 'pup' for the first year and then joined the ranks of the 'plebs' or junior members of the college. A 'conch' was not a seashell from some sun-drenched



island but a student who kept the rules in order not to get into trouble. Members of staff had nicknames. Fr McKee was known as 'The Belloc' because he frequently quoted the author Hilaire Belloc. Canon Sheridan, who made the monster sledge 'Aristotle', was known as 'The Baxter' for a reason now lost. Canon Anderson was 'Hank' because he was thought to resemble Hank Marvin. Fr O'Hanlon's prowess on the football field won him the name of 'The Jigger'. 'Wee Bub' was Fr Morrow. 'The Mox' was Fr Moran because a student was caught writing 'oxymoron' on the board as this Prof entered the classroom.

The Michies of Badenyon

George Watt

I was born 73 years ago in Glenlivet. My maternal grandparents George Mitchell and Betsy Stuart had the farm of Tom-breckachie. On the day my father went to register the birth at the Registry Office beside the Pole Inn, the story goes that my middle name Mitchell was left on the bar counter. Since then I have been plain George Watt! I also have a cousin Marjory in the Braes whose husband Gordon McGillivray farms Achnascrew. This article is about my paternal forebears in Glenbuchat (see back cover map) the Michies of Badenyon, and their connection with Scalan.

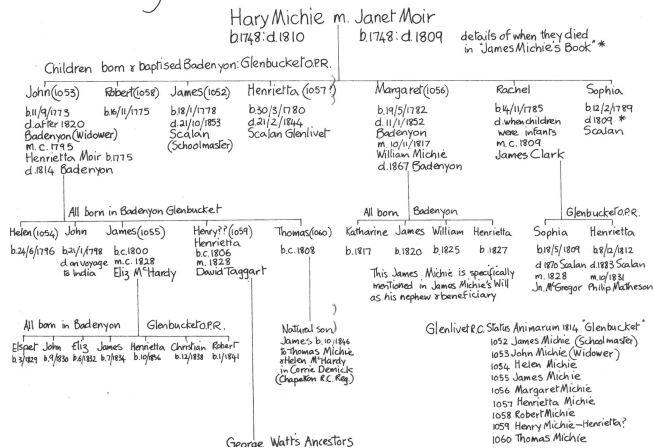
An article in the June 1995 issue, 'Tombae and Scalan: *Status Animarum*', presented an 1814 'state of souls' census by the priest at Tombae. James Michie was discussed in it. Born at Badenyon in January 1778, he was almost certainly one of the last Scalan students (the register is missing) and he went on to become a schoolmaster at Achnascrew. When the college closed, James took up residence there with his sister Henrietta as housekeeper, farming and making whisky for the southern market. When an 1823 Act (introduced to Parliament by their landlord the Duke of Gordon) made small stills illegal, James found himself regarded, like his neighbours, as a 'smuggler'. He left the choir and disappeared from Church records.



James Michie's Book

A book which seems to have belonged to James as a Scalan student came into the possession of John S. Gallacher, a retired teacher who regularly comes back from Motherwell to Millbank, beside Achnascrew. John's forebears lived at the Scalan, and he has carefully preserved this little volume (12 cm. by 5 cm.) entitled *Serious Considerations of a Soul that Sincerely seeks the Way of Truth in the Sight of God*. The words 'James Michie's Book' are inscribed on it several times in a schoolboy hand, but inside the back cover the handwriting is mature: 'August 4th 1809. My sister Sophia departed this life at half past seven o'clock afternoon.' Then, 'December 7th 1809. My Mother departed this life nearly about nine o'clock afternoon.' Finally, 'November 30th 1810. My father departed this life half past one o'clock afternoon.'

The Michie Family of Glenbuchat



To me this was like finding the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle. I had already learned of my great-great-grandmother's 1828 marriage to David Taggart, in Glenbuchat Old Parish Records (OPR). This Henrietta Michie died at Badenyon in 1892 aged 86. The death certificate gives her parents as John Michie and Henrietta Moir. The censuses show that their daughter Henrietta was born about 1806, but her baptism is not recorded in the OPR. The couple had other children who were not entered at Glenbuchat. There is census evidence once again for James, born about 1800, and Thomas c.1808. No doubt they were baptised by the Glenlivet priest. As schoolmaster at Achnascraw James Michie went to mass at Tombae and there met members of his family who came over, weather permitting, from Badenyon by the Ladder Path.

Kirk and chapel records vary, and there is one mistake on the Catholic side. The James Michie who was born about 1800 married a McHardy from Demickmore. Their first child Elspet was registered in Glenbuchat on March 14 1829 as 'lawful daughter' (they were married) to James Michie and his spouse Elizabeth McHardy alias Bain. I believe Elspet (a form of Elizabeth) was baptised at the new church of Chapelstown, with the mother's name given - in error - as *Helen* McHardy. The priest at that time was not familiar with local names.

In addition to various local records, I obtained valuable information from *The Michie Families of Aberdeenshire* by Charles Michie of Calcutta, written about 1905. Most of the Badenyon Michies are listed but Henrietta Michie, born 1780, is wrongly said to have married David Taggart in 1828 and died at Scalan in 1844. This was the first indication I had of a Scalan connection.

Stuart Mitchell

At this point I requested assistance from the late Stuart Mitchell of Turriff, who is well known to readers of this magazine. Our information did not quite agree, partly because John Michie 'Widower' was missing as a son of Hary Michie and Janet Moir. In April 2000 my wife Margaret and I were going to a family reunion in Dufftown and we arranged to meet Stuart at my brother's home at Convalleys in Glenrines. However a very heavy snow storm made it impossible for Stuart to drive up from Turriff with his wife Jorja. I phoned and made the

remark that we hoped for better luck next time. 'George,' he said, 'I doubt very much if there will be a next time.' Realising how ill he must be, we delayed our departure and met a day or two later. While discussing Michie family history Stuart said, 'We have been singing to the wrong sheet of music and I'm not sure who produced the first edition.' Sadly, time was not in Stuart's favour and he passed away in 2001.

The numbers in the family tree are taken from near the end of the Rev. James Gordon's 1814 census, which contains no information about relationships between one Badenyon Michie and another. Mr Gordon must have written down the nine names on a visit and copied them into his leather bound volume, but he got one wrong. Henry Michie, No. 1059, cannot be found anywhere else. The name Henry never appears in the Glenbuchat OPR, only Hary. However there were two Henriettas among the Badenyon Michies and only one in the *Status Animarum*. No. 1057 is Henrietta Michie, the schoolmaster's sister, and I am confident that No. 1059 is his niece Henrietta, not Henry, born about 1806 in Glenbuchat.

James Michie (15) is registered in the 1841 census at Scalan in the house of James and Henrietta Michie. He was born in Glenbuchat the son of William Michie and Margaret Michie (No. 1058). The Tombae register records that in 1852 'Margaret Michie, Badenyon, Glenbucket, died there aged 70.' Her son appears in the former schoolmaster's will as 'James Michie my nephew, son of William Michie in Badenyon, to have liberty to live with them with the family at Scalan, also to have liberty to keep a few sheep on the pasture if he so pleases.' Charles Michie, back from Calcutta, met him later: 'James Michie, Tomintoul, born 6th Aug. 1820 was a son of William Michie Badenyon. He worked in cutting out of the railway from Ballater to Aberdeen; also at the laying of the water from the Head of Cairnwell to Torry, which altogether occupied 30 years of his life. He is a bachelor, almost totally blind, has a very retentive memory, but is in very poor circumstances. He is a staunch Roman Catholic, and when I visited him in September 1905, he told me that, given the opportunity, he could convert me! He says the Michies came from Deeside to Donside. The Michies are said to have been 700 years in Badenyon.' James Michie died in Tomintoul on May 6 1906, aged 86, according to the Inspector for the Poor.

By his uncle's will James received £20 in instalments through his cousins Henrietta and Sophia. Both lived in the Scalan farm town (which supported fifty people then) with Henrietta married to Philip Matheson and Sophia to John McGrigor, Molecatcher (see 'Of Moles and Men', *ScN* 13). The baptisms of James Clark and Rachel Michie's two daughters Sophia and Henrietta were recorded at Glenbuchat - May 18 1810 and October 8 1812. They were brought up 'most carefully' by their Uncle James and Aunt Henrietta. In *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland* Dom Odo Blundell wrote that the two girls came to Scalan as orphans. Their mother Rachel certainly died when they were infants, but James Clark, Wood Manufacturer (Cartwright on his daughter's death certificate), was at Badenyon in 1841.

One more James Michie appears in the Chapeltown register: 'James, Son to Thomas Michie, Banjon [the new priest's version], Glenbucket and Helen McHardy, Corrie Demick, was born 20th and baptised 22nd October, 1846. Sponsors Alexander Grant, Corrieannach and Margaret Grant, Demick.' The four-year-old James was at Corrie Demick in the 1851 census with his mother Helen and his uncle John McHardy as head of the household. According to our man

from Calcutta, 'Thomas Michie of Badenyon had a son James (natural) by Helen McHardy. He was farmer at Corry Glenlivet and from there went to Fochabers. He was a great athlete and challenged Donald Dinnie.' Fochabers would have been convenient for travelling to Games meetings by train. Dinnie, a winner of 150 championships, became the first professional athlete in 1867. James Michie, a powerful member of the family to finish with, probably retired from the heavy events on his marriage to Jessie Rattray in 1875. After that he lifted sheaves at Corrie Demick.

I would like to thank Ronald J. MacGregor and the staff of Elgin Local History Department; also Elspet Esther Kulske in Michigan, a descendant of James Michie (1800). gwatt000@sympatico.ca

Readers Write

In the last issue an item began: 'The Benedictine priest Thomas Brockie is buried in the Walla' kirk beside Beldorney Castle.'

Congratulations on a very interesting Scalan News. May I clarify Thomas Brockie's status? He was not a Benedictine though he was very closely connected with the Benedictine abbey in Ratisbon. He did his humanities in Scotland and so was not a boy at the newly founded Scots seminary there. He wanted to be a monk like his elder brother Daniel (Donald), who was Fr Marianus in religion and is the well known historian, but it was the monastery's policy at the time not to accept blood brothers in the community. So he did his church studies in Germany sponsored by the monastery, and as a priest worked under the monastery's auspices. He sometimes went back to Germany and in 1747 and 1756 took Scots boys to Ratisbon to enter the seminary. If others had followed Brockie as secular priests sponsored by the monastery, it would have been very interesting.

Dr Mark Dilworth, Edinburgh.

The Right Rev. Abbot of Iona, who was honoured with this title after the closure of Fort Augustus Abbey five years ago, may have something to add to the event described on p. 19 when Fr James Gallus Robertson took four boys, including his nephew Charles Fraser, out to Ratisbon in 1800.

May I say how much I appreciate your contributions to the Catholic highland story? One main concern in my own work at present is to modify Fr William Anderson's views about the extent to which Scottish Catholicism had faded by 1600. I do this by treating those Catholics who got posts in Catholic countries and were able to retain their faith as long as the Jesuit missionaries allowed them to present themselves at kirk services, but once the Scots Jesuits fell in with their English confrères and forbade such 'Church papists' they were liable to forfeit their goods and homes. But around 1600 there were still quite a number. Many of their sons got posts in colleges abroad, especially in France, while the going was good.

Dr John Durkan, Kirkintilloch.

*This letter from the doyen of Scottish Catholic historians came in response to a comment on his recent **Innes Review** article on Thomas Dempster, who left Buchan to win European renown as a scholar.*

You thought we seemed ageless at Oban – if only this had been so we could have continued our Carmelite life there! We kept hoping for some new young vocations, but as these did not arrive we had to reach the decision, with real sadness, to close our Carmel. We could not have wished for more caring and devoted friends in Oban – Catholic and non-Catholic. The old ones remembered vividly their contacts with the Carmel in childhood. Oban was founded in 1924. We received a wonderful welcome from the Sisters here in Fife. It is a big Infirmary Carmel of 26, caring for the elderly and needy. It is beautiful, as was Oban. I hope Father Joe will find the right place for our big crucifix in Morar. It was the focal point of our garden. May God bless your great work for Scalán.

Sister Marie Thérèse, Dysart.

The garden of St Cumin's is being cleared, and the hills and islands of Loch Morar will provide an even more beautiful setting.

I took Scalán News with me to the Writers' Conference in March because I knew I would see my fellow contributor Betty Madill from Inverurie. Since the Flood of 16 November 2002 I haven't been able to do any work but have a few articles and poems in mind. By pure chance I went round past my Aunt Mina at Tomnavoulin and there she was, writing out the words of a song my Uncle Charlie used to sing as a young man. I didn't know any of that but I had earmarked the same poem for my second book. There's plenty to write about, just like the 'Muckle Spate o' Twenty-nine'. We were driven upstairs with what we could carry, as the water rose to about twelve inches above the kitchen units. About ten o'clock at night a fire engine came rushing down from the Cottar Hoose direction straight into the loch outside our door. There was a sudden splash downstairs, and when Greg put on the breast waders to investigate he found the television had toppled into the water when the table wobbled from the motion outside. . . I see *Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet* is still going strong.

Hetty Milne, Elgin.

Newsletters sent to friends and family from the house she never abandoned were passed on. They are vivid, 'bringing home' the short and long term effects of a natural disaster. Let's hope summer helps Hetty to complete her own 'Tales'.

Father Martin's letter from Pluscarden reminded me of 'The Poisoned Priests' by Mgr Alexander MacWilliam in the May issue. I was pleased to read about Fr Angus Mackenzie who was a second cousin of my grandfather. I hadn't realised that two other priests were poisoned at the same time. Following information we received from you some time ago, my brother Angus and I spent a day at the National Library in Edinburgh. Then Angus died suddenly and I lost the inclination to go on researching, but the arrival of November's Scalán News spurred on interest once more. We were unable to find out much about the Rev. Austin M'Donnell who

died at Aigas in 1812. I would be glad to hear if you or any of your readers come across anything about him.

Gay Giulianotti, Perth.

On what follows, the editor got it wrong, three priests having entered his head some time ago and settled there as a fixed idea.

The Poisoned Priests – Dingwall, 1856

Ian Stewart

Father Martin responds to the editor's question seeking the identity of the third priest who was poisoned at the fateful Dingwall dinner in 1856. Commenting that 'all the dead priests are buried in a row at Eskadale,' he suggests - very sensibly - that the name of the third priest will be found in contemporary newspapers.

I am not clear myself where the idea that three priests were poisoned at that Dingwall dinner has come from. Mgr MacWilliam included a footnote in his *Innes Review* article of 1973 referring to this event. The footnote was a statement about the tragedy by another author, Joseph Mitchell, but neither Mitchell nor MacWilliam said that the three persons who died were all priests. Contemporary newspapers do indeed reveal the identity of the third victim, as does an examination of 1856 death certificates in the Registrar General's keeping. And that third victim was not a priest.

The third man was Lewis M Mackenzie, Esq. of Findon, seven miles from Dingwall on the shore of the Cromarty Firth. A landed proprietor, he was heir to one of the largest estates in Ross-shire. *The Scotsman's* Inverness correspondent reported that 'Mr Mackenzie, who had but lately become a convert to the Roman Catholic Church, was just about to be married to a daughter of Lord Lovat's.' *The Inverness Courier* added that 'Mr Mackenzie of Findon, from his suavity of manners, intelligence and the interest he evinced in county business, had he been spared, would have occupied a conspicuous and useful position. He will be succeeded in the property by a younger brother, now in the army in the Crimea.'

The dinner host that evening – whose 'domestics' were responsible for the tragic accident – was John McIver, Esq., Provost of Dingwall and local Agent (Manager) of the Caledonian Bank. He, and others, also became ill but recovered.

The burials at Eskadale were supervised by William MacDonald, the sexton there. The deaths of these two respected priests (Revs. Angus Mackenzie and James Gordon) and an influential landowning convert certainly held back the expansion of the Church in the north at that time, but at least we can now stop searching for a third poisoned priest.

The Rev. Charles Fraser

and his Forebears

James Russell (with Nicholas Coleman)

Following my 'John Russell (1820-93): Church Painter' in the November issue, this article is about our mutual great-great-great-uncle Charles Fraser. He died in 1835 at the age of 46 while working as assistant to 'Priest' Charles Gordon of Aberdeen. Charles Fraser was born at Tyrie near Fraserburgh and baptised on 26 February 1789 in the Catholic chapel of the Double House at Strichen, as shown in the frontispiece. Church records give 1788 as the year of Charles' birth, but this may be wrong: in these days baptism usually followed within a few days of birth. On the other hand the winter of 1788-89 was one of the coldest in memory, and the five-mile bridle path from Tyrie to Strichen may have been blocked by ice and snow.

Charles was the third child of John Fraser and Isabella Robertson (there were to be five sons and five daughters) and his controversial career as a Catholic priest reaching out to other Christians may be seen as a reflection of family relationships before he was born. On the father's side it was believed (but by no means proved) that John Fraser was a descendant of Simon Fraser Lord Lovat, who was executed at Tyburn in 1746. [*The illustration used for 'Eilean Ban, Lord Lovat and Prince Charlie' (ScN 24) was captioned, it now appears, 'My headless trunk resumes its monkish frock.'*] Whether a descendant or not, John Fraser was a flax-dresser when the couple set up house at Tyrie north of Strichen.

On the Mother's Side

Much information on the mother's side comes from the memories - in old age - of Charles' sister Margaret, who was a Benedictine nun of St Mary's Priory at Princethorpe, near Rugby: 'The fact of my mother marrying a person whose extraction was unknown infuriated my Grandfather Robertson, and he never gave his consent to the marriage and did not even speak to my mother until two years after they were married.' This seems to be confirmed from the Old Parish Register. It was not until the 1794 birth of Charles' brother James in 'Mormond Village' (Strichen) that Philip Robertson consented to witness the baptism of a grandchild.

Charles' mother was a Robertson of Struan in Perthshire. She was also related through her own mother to the Gordons of Auchleuchries in Buchan, whose most famous son had led the armies of Czar Peter the Great. They were connected in turn with the Gordons of Wardhouse, where Charles' great-grandmother Catherine Gordon was married in front of a life-sized picture of General Patrick Gordon. She went to Fontainebleau in France as a very young bride, and after being widowed was abandoned (and robbed) by her second husband Kenneth Mackenzie. A son Alexander was educated at Liège and Douai and became a leading Jesuit in London, taking the name Clinton. Madame Mackenzie was in Edinburgh with her two daughters when the

Jacobites came to town and gained their first success at Prestonpans.

Four years later in 1749 Isabella Mackenzie (aged 22) was walking in the city with some MacDonalds of Borrodale when she was espied by Philip Robertson, on leave from his Scotch Dutch Regiment: 'Much struck by her appearance, he enquired who she was and I believe proposed to her before the end of the day. He was a Protestant but promised her full liberty for her religion and that he would leave the army. They were married in less than six weeks.' It was agreed that any sons born would be brought up in his faith, and any daughters in hers – a common arrangement for mixed marriages in north-east Scotland. Philip moved to Strichen, rented land to grow flax, and built the Double House for his family.

The Double House

'As he had promised that his daughters would be brought up as Catholics, he fitted up two rooms in the house as a Chapel, which served for all the Catholics in those parts for many years. Bishop Hay gave him a priest.'

This was the Jesuit Alexander Duguid (1711-89) of the Auchinhove family, whose Deeside home was burnt after Culloden. Father Duguid was in Buchan until 1784 when, eyesight failing, he retired to Elgin. While Philip Robertson's two sons 'were still young he engaged a young parson as their tutor,' so that the mother of Charles Fraser grew up in a household where 'there was a priest and a parson every day at table.' Isabella and her sister were educated alongside their brothers at home, and Isabella (at least) gained from it: 'She was clever and considered quite a prodigy among the ladies in those days. She was very well instructed in the Catholic religion and it used to amuse her father to ask her to discuss religious topics with the minister who could not keep his ground with her and often could not answer her at all.'

Robertson stopped attending kirk services, walked the garden during mass and converted three years before his death. He became concerned that Scots university life would corrupt the morals of his sons: 'Grandmamma answered very gently that if he wished them to be preserved from vice and at the same



time to have their education properly finished he ought to send them to a Catholic college.' After consulting Father Clinton and Bishop Hay, he sent them to the Jesuits at Dinant in the Netherlands. Within two years both were received into the Catholic Church. The older son Charles opted for a naval career while James, aged 14, continued his studies at the old Scots monastery of St James', Ratisbon, in Bavaria. After six years he was professed as a Benedictine monk, taking the name Gallus, and ordained in 1782. He came back to Strichen as chaplain and missionary to Buchan, but left after three years because he felt his presence was holding back his father's conversion. To complete this tale of priests at table, he was succeeded by the Rev. James Carruthers (1759-1832) of New Abbey near Dumfries. His brother Andrew Carruthers (1770-1852) was given an early taste of authority as master at Scaln after fleeing the Scots College Douai along with other students - including the future Priest Gordon. Later

Andrew became Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern District based in Edinburgh. The Rev. James came to Strichen from the Mission of Glenlivet, and left for Preshome in 1805 after nine years. He was considered one of the best Catholic preachers in Scotland, yet very much at ease in Protestant society. No doubt he had an influence on the young Charles Fraser.

Fr James Gallus Robertson OSB

It is worth pausing to consider the still greater influence of Charles' Benedictine Uncle James. He was a truly remarkable man, partly because Ratisbon, along with the other *Schottenklöster* of Würzburg and Erfurt, was a centre of scholarship. Moving to Edinburgh after Buchan, he published a Roman Liturgy, an edition of *Austin's Devotions*, and the first Catholic version of the New Testament to be printed in Scotland.



It was superseded by George Hay's Bible in five volumes. While serving Munches in Galloway Fr Robertson pressed for the introduction of hymn-singing but Bishop Hay, fearing renewed persecution, refused to allow such a novelty.

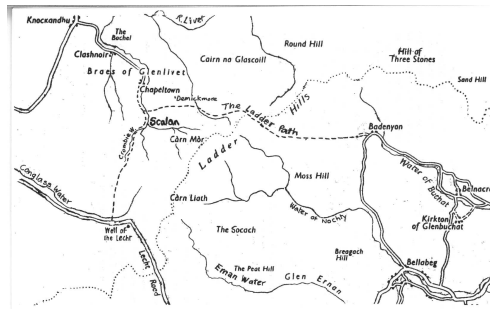
The wandering monk's employment as a government agent (like Abbé Paul Macpherson, *ScN* 5) was described in *Narrative of a Secret Mission to the Danish Islands in 1808*, by Rev. Jas. Robertson. The Spanish General Romana was detained there by Napoleon's troops, but Fr Gallus made contact by posing as a German cigar merchant, and guerrilla support was obtained for Wellington in the Peninsular War. In his latter years at Ratisbon, Charles Fraser's 'somewhat eccentric' uncle became interested in the education of the deaf and dumb, and opened the first blind asylum in Bavaria.

To Aberdeen and Beyond

John and Isabella Fraser's family grew year by year, and they moved from Tyrie to be with the widowed Philip Robertson in Strichen's roomy Double House. When he died they could not afford to keep it up, and moved to Aberdeen 'to be near the Chapel and for their children's improvement.' Charles Fraser received his first Catechism lessons from Charles Gordon soon after the two-times Scalán student – before and after the Reign of Terror – was ordained in 1795: forty years later they were to be fellow priests in the Castlegate. Charles was confirmed by Bishop Hay. In 1800 he travelled by way of Leith and Hamburg with his Uncle James and three other boys to join the monastery school at Ratisbon: 'Here he remained about six years, the pride of his teachers and the darling of his youthful co-disciples. The continental wars which sprang from the French Revolution having forced him to seek asylum in England, he continued his studies at the Catholic college of Stonyhurst.'

Stonyhurst College had also been driven out – from Liège – by French Republican armies, and masters and pupils came as asylum seekers to Lancashire. They were well received. The community had been founded by the Society of Jesus which was suppressed world-wide by

papal decree between 1773 and 1814. During that time there were only 'ex-Jesuit' priests, and even after the Society was restored by Pius VII these 'Fathers of the Faith' were cautious. This helps to explain the uncertainty about whether Charles Fraser was a Jesuit before he came to Aberdeen as a priest in 1830. He was a leading light at Stonyhurst, pursuing his studies until the age of 22 'with such zeal, ability and success that he was selected as one of the teachers at the newly projected college of Clongowes Wood in the vicinity of Dublin . . . and he was soon promoted to the dignity of the priesthood.' Clongowes may be described as the Stonyhurst of Ireland (both are Jesuit colleges to this day) and his obituary in Scotland states that Charles Fraser was Superior or head master there. This does not appear in the Clongowes records - for reasons which remain to be discussed.



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