

Scalan News

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“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...”

(The above comes from an address given by John Geddes to his students in the Royal Scots College, Valladolid, Spain, on 18 June, 1777, at a meeting of the community known as “The Academy”. He was the saviour of Scalan as its rector, 1762-67, built the house we can visit today, and established it as a centre of excellence in piety, learning and even agriculture. In 1770 he was sent to Spain to rescue the Scotch College, Madrid. He re-established it in the northern city of Valladolid where it flourished for over 200 years before it re-located to Salamanca in 1988. There are many priests in Scotland today who are “Spaniards”, as they are known, former students of the Royal Scots College, Spain.)



The ingenious Priest Hide in Dr Dodd's Library. This hide, behind a swinging beam, would once have been hidden by paneling, book shelves and book cupboard doors. Both photos refer to the article "The Ultimate Sacrifice", page 5.



Harvington Hall
secret chapel.

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Important dates in 2015:

Tuesday 26 May: The Annual General Meeting is due to take place with Mass at the Scalan at 12.30, followed by lunch in the Braes Hall, Chapeltown of Glenlivet, and the meeting proper thereafter. The AGM is the time for renewing subscriptions.

Saturday 4 July: A day of celebration in honour of the 400th anniversary year of the Martyrdom of St. John Ogilvie is being held in Keith, Moray, his place of birth. It will include various activities throughout the day, culminating with Mass celebrated in Keith Football Ground at 3.00pm.

Sunday 5 July: The Annual Pilgrimage Mass is due to take place at Scalan at 4.00pm. Bishop Gilbert has agreed to be the preacher.

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The Aftermath of the 1715 and 1745 Uprisings

James Edward Stuart, the 'Old Pretender' was defeated at Preston (Lancashire) and escaped back to France. His son Charles Edward Stuart, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', was defeated at Culloden. The government put a thirty thousand pound price on his head but he was never betrayed. He spent several months on the run but Jacobite friends helped him return to France. This marked the end of the Catholic House of Stuart.

Martin Luther, a German born in 1483, preached the Protestant religion which spread throughout Europe and by the 16th century had spread to England. By the 17th Century it was taking root in Scotland with the Union of the Crowns. The real persecution started with the abdication of James II and VII. The future of the Catholic religion looked bleak.

After Culloden the Duke of Cumberland, 'The Butcher', ordered his troops to collect the rebel's weapons and systematically destroy the enemy's property. He and his men demolished all Mass and Meeting-Houses. Homes of the leading Jacobites were destroyed whether it was a castle or a hovel. The government brought in new laws in the Highlands to discourage future uprisings. Heritable jurisdictions, the traditional foundation of the clan chief's legal authority, were abolished: the Highland dress and music were outlawed: The Vesting Act opened the way for the annexing of Jacobite estates by the Crown. There was no leeway for anyone. In the Scaln area troops were brought into Corgarff and detachments sent to Tomintoul, Glenlivet, Demick and many other locations. Priests went underground using aliases and wearing working clothes to blend in with the scenery. They were known as the itinerant priests who never stayed long in one place. Ten were arrested and two died in captivity. It was estimated that up to 1000 Scottish Catholics died, were banished or escaped abroad. The later included Bishop Hugh Macdonald who reached a watershed in his life. See *Hugh MacDonald, Highlander, Jacobite and Bishop* by John Watts ISBN: 0859765601

Hiding places in Jacobite dwellings, Scottish castles and mansions:

1. Traquair House near Peebles; Mass was held in the chapel that had an escape route for the priest.
2. Cawder Castle; small chamber near the roof.
3. Fetternear, Kemnay, Aberdeenshire; secret chamber in the wall behind a bookcase with a glass front which was a fixture in the room, the back of which could be slid aside giving access to a recess.
4. Dalpersie House, Old Aberdeenshire; a hiding hole or recess in one of the upper chambers where a Gordon hid and was found. He was one of the last victims executed after the '45.

5. Balnacraig in Aboyne; the laird was concealed in his own house whilst his wife entertained the search party. The secret chamber was through a panel at the back of a box bed in the wainscot in an isolated bedroom at the top of the house. The bedroom could only be reached by a secret staircase from the corridor below.
6. Fyvie Castle; the tall roofed and cone shaped turret had a small space, marked “the armoury”, in the floor; immediately above a trapdoor which opened into a hidey-hole.
7. Kemnay: the hiding place was in the dining room chimney.
8. Elphinstone; in the bay window of the great hall is the masked entrance to a hidden staircase in the thickness of the wall leading to a small room in the tower with an exit through a trap door in the floor of a passage.
9. Gordoston Mansion; this curious old mansion has numerous passages and rooms in the thickness of the walls, one of which can hold 40 to 60 people.
10. Glamis Castle and the Cumberland seat of the Stenhouse family have secret rooms but the location of them is only known to the owners and passed on to the heir presumptive.

There were many more places in the hills, mountains and forests known to the Jacobites, some of which remain secret.

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The Ultimate Sacrifice.

In England in 1585 an act of parliament was passed which made it high treason to give food or shelter to a Catholic priest. Many of the big houses and mansions had their own chapels often with a resident priest. Harvington Hall, Worcestershire has six priest holes and a concealed chapel where Mass could be celebrated by whichever priest was in residence. These are attributed to Nicholas Owen.

To be a Catholic meant danger, but many were prepared to risk their own lives to keep their religion alive. Nicholas Owen was a carpenter trained by his father. Two of his brothers were priests. A third, Henry, a layman, printed clandestine Catholic books. Henry Garnet travelled from Rome to England to set up a secret printing press and probably contacted Henry Owen for advice. Henry Garnet, a Jesuit, was a remarkable man: when he landed at Folkestone he was the only Jesuit at liberty, nineteen years later there were forty. He established the framework on which the Catholic Church in England was built during the next 200 years. Garnet travelled from shire to shire establishing Mass centres throughout the country. Nicholas accompanied with him and built hiding places to protect the priests and hosts. He never spoke of his work or built two hiding places the same. At Upton Hall one was used by Bonnie Prince Charlie when he visited England in 1754.

In 1594 Nicholas was arrested in London, tortured and then released on payment of a large sum of money. He returned to Father Garnet and continued his work until 1605 when a group of hot headed young Catholics decided to blow up the Houses of Parliament. The plot failed but all the young men were friends of Garnet: some escaped, but many were shot. The Jesuits were hunted; three Jesuits and Nicholas found refuge in Hindlip Hall*. He was starved out on the fourth day of a twelve day search for him and his companions, arrested and taken to London where Nicolas were brutally tortured on the rack. Nicholas revealed nothing, dying on the 2nd of March 1606. He was murdered when his captors realised he would never betray his associates. During Edmund Campion's brief Apostolate in England, 1580-81 Nicholas acted as his servant and protector against those who were against his preaching. Edmund died on the gallows at Tyburn; a spectacle to God, Angels and men.

Nicholas died as secretly as he lived, his handiwork living on. He joined St. Campion and other martyrs who died for their beliefs. Saint Nicholas Owen made a major contribution to the Catholic Church in England.

I have obtained the information from a booklet written by his fellow Jesuit Philip Caraman. So many have fought and died to keep the Catholic Religion alive in Scotland, England and other countries. It must not be in vain.

*Hindlip Hall and Harvington Hall are fairly close together in Worcestershire but Hindlip Hall was demolished in 1820 after a fire. They had very similar designs.

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Points of interest

1. By the end of the year we will have some idea about The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Trust's bid for National Heritage Lottery funding to resurrect the two barns and the water wheels. The plan being to use one for educational purposes and the other to house old machinery as discussed at the A.G.M.

2. This year has seen an increase of red and roe deer numbers after the winter of 2012-13 when so many died of starvation owing to the depth of snow covering the fields for weeks. The hedgehogs and the barn owls haven't returned but we have at least four tawny owls in the area one of which has taken up residence in the recess above the Scalan front door. The lapwings didn't appear to nest in the Scalan fields but the keeper spotted them higher up the hill; possibly they were disturbed on the lower fields. Curlews, redshanks and oyster catchers raised their young in the usual places. There was an increase in the number of swallows' nests in the buildings; what a joy to watch them swooping for insects on the wing. The first skeins of geese were seen and heard in the first week of September as they made their way to their winter feeding grounds.

3. The Annual Scalan Mass on the first Sunday in July was well attended despite the rain which poured down as the Mass started. Up went the umbrellas, hoods on coats and even someone managed a newspaper hat. Archbishop Conti was the main celebrant and Father Michael Briody gave the homily which can be read on page 16. After Mass, John and Sylvia Toovey provided tea and coffee plus individual quiches which proved very popular as did the cakes. A number of people sheltered in the cottage with their refreshments. No pictures were sold but the cards did well. The rain stopped for people going home. Also attending were the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia of Greyfriars Convent. Elgin. (cf. article, page 13.)

4. It was good to see the priests celebrating Mass on the 3rd September, with no rain nor midges but a bit of sun. This is the second year there has been a priests' pilgrimage - long may it continue. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Toal who has always been a staunch supporter of Scalan and once again he found time to meet up with the other priests as did Fr. Martin Birrell OSB from Pluscarden Abbey.

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The Hamilton Family in Strathbogie: Three Benedictines and one Scalan student.

James Hamilton 1702 – 1786

His father was John Hamilton c1669 to 1738, living first in Boghead, Fochabers, later in Gibston, Huntly as the Duke of Gordon's factor; his mother was Elizabeth Gordon. James arrived at the seminary in Ratisbon in 1713 and was professed in 1719 taking the name Placidus. He studied theology for two years at Wurzburg and went to the Scottish Mission in 1730, first to Glengarry, and in 1731 to the Cabrach. In the following year he took up a post at the French Embassy in London, returning to Ratisbon in 1756 being elected abbot of Wurzburg in November of that year. He resigned in 1763, returning to London to be chaplain at the Imperial Chapel, dying either in London or by another account in Scotland in 1786 aged 84.

During his first sojourn in London he was appealed to by his cousin John Hamilton for his help. John Hamilton, a soldier previous to his position as the Duke of Gordon's Chamberlain in Huntly, was a Jacobite and deeply involved in the Jacobite Rising of 1745. He was captured at Carlisle, taken to London, imprisoned, tried and despite his appeals to his cousin James and others, was executed in 1746.

Cosmo Hamilton, 1752 – 1835

His father was John Hamilton in Gibston c 1720 to 1759; his grandfather Walter Hamilton 1695 to 1727(?), Secretary to Alexander, 2nd Duke of Gordon at Gordon Castle; his great-uncle was James (Placidus), OSB; his great grandfather was John

Hamilton in Gibston. His mother was Janet Gordon of Keithmore (her uncle Bishop James Gordon).

He was called after Cosmo George, 3rd Duke of Gordon. He went to the seminary at Ratisbon in 1764, professed in 1776, took the name James, and was sent to Erfurt where his younger brother was prior. He was extraordinary professor in 1782, dean in 1813, ordinary professor in 1815, dying there in 1835.

Alexander Hamilton, 1754 – 1828

He accompanied his brother Cosmo to Ratisbon and was professed in 1777. in religion taking the name Joseph. He was sent to Erfurt in 1779 and succeeded Bernard Grant as prior; he was the last superior of Erfurt before its suppression in 1819. He died there in 1828.

John Hamilton, younger brother of Cosmo and Alexander, 1755 – 1823?

In 1764 he was a student at Scalan. In John Geddes' Register and Diary there is a list of students in 1764: 'Giovanni Hamilton entry Maggio' and further on: 'Nel mese di Maggio Giovanni Hamilton figlio del Sig. Gio. Hamilton e della Sig.ra Giovanella Gordon in Gibstoun intro in Scalan come convittore, avendo allora anni e studi- ando I principii della Grammatica'. (Innes Review Vol.XIV No 2 Autumn 1963). In a letter from John Geddes at Preshome to George Hay, 27/6/1769, he writes: 'Upon further examination, it appears that Johny Hamilton has no mind to embrace an Ecclesiastical state of life: he is not therefore to be sent to Douay, and Mr Siniten [Bishop James Grant] substitute in his place for that House Willie Reid, whom you saw at Scalan'.

John Hamilton's father had died in 1759 when he was 4 years of age; his mother married again but died on the 25th April 1769. This fact no doubt affected his decision two months later to go no further with his studies for the priesthood. Only John and his sister Mary were left of the family in this country, Mary going to live with her aunt Henrietta Gordon, married to the uncle of John Menzies of Pitfodels [Blairs], David Menzies of Concraig. Nothing has so far come to light to confirm where John went and what he did. From her letters to priest acquaintances his sister Mary knew he was in London. His great-uncle James, Father Placidus, had returned to London in 1763 and there is a baptismal entry in 1781 at the Imperial Chapel for 'June 24th Hamilton - Margaret daughter of John and Lidia [Goodson], sponsors Placido Hamilton and Margaret Sharp', but whether this is John Hamilton of Huntly and Scalan, it is not possible to say with so little information. Probably a more certain reference is the burial record at St Mary Moorfields, 8th January 1823 of John Hamilton aged 70.



Floorboards in the corner of the Chapel can be raised revealing a hidden storage compartment.

The utensils used for Mass could be concealed here in the event of a raid on the house.

See article "The Ultimate Sacrifice", page 5.

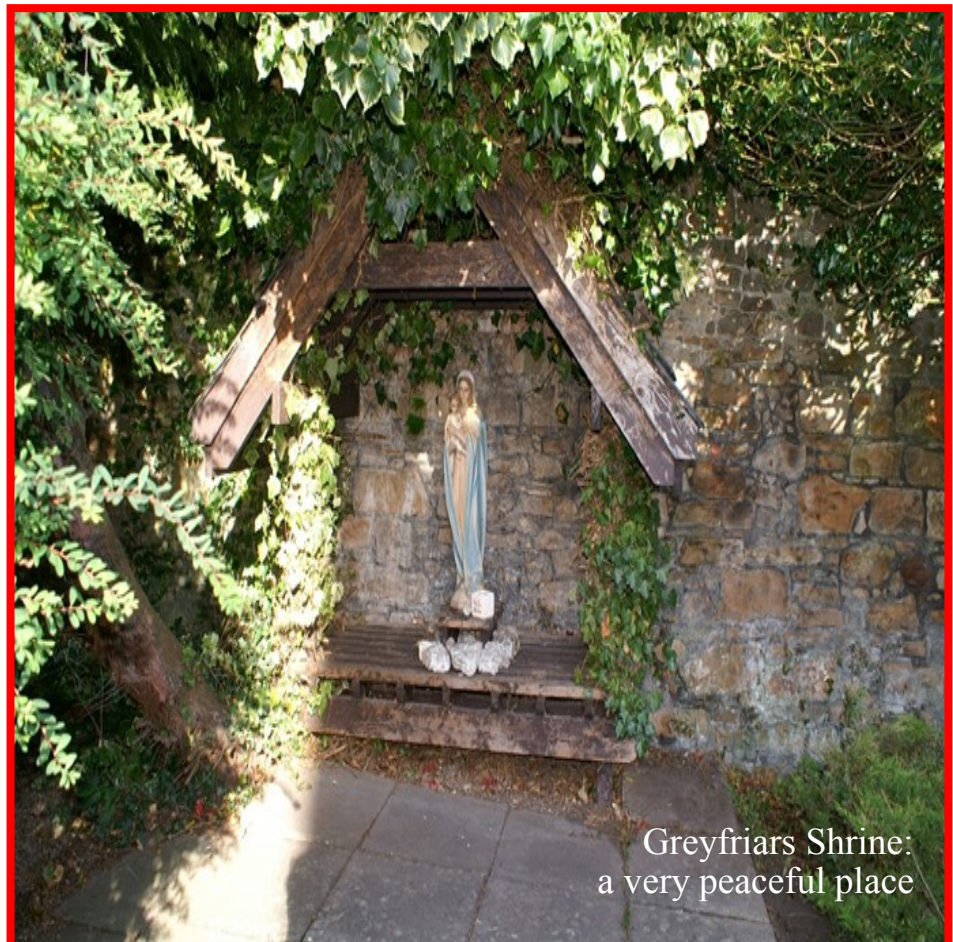


The Cancel,
Greyfriars.

See article on
Greyfriars,
Page 13.



The Rood Screen
Greyfriars



Greyfriars Shrine:
a very peaceful place



Fr. Briody, well-protected by the awning, perseveringly delivered his homily, also well-protected by plastic covering, to the broolly-wielding congregation. Well, it could have been worse - you have surely not forgotten the midges of 2012?! Below - preparing for the deluge!





Bishop Toal, Bishop of Motherwell, returned to his native diocese, joined by Bishop Gilbert of Aberdeen, and priests from Scotland and beyond, to mark the 300th anniversary of the foundation in 1714 of the first seminary on British soil on Eilean Bàn in Loch Morar. Midge featured here too and drove us indoors to celebrate Mass in the church of Our Lady and St. Cumin on the shore of the loch. The seminary had a short life. It was caught up in the destruction wrought by government troops, the “redcoats”, after the failure of the 1715 Jacobite Uprising. It was then judged to be too near the sea, allowing the navy to bring in soldiers without much warning, so a safer place had to be found. It was then that Scalan was chosen, far from the sea in the remote Braes of Glenlivet. Eilean Bàn is the predecessor and “mother” of Scalan.

A very Happy and Holy Christmas
to all our Readers
and God's Blessings in the New Year.

The four children of John Hamilton and Janet Gordon, Alexander, Cosmo, John and Mary were left an inheritance from their great-uncle John who had been executed in London; after protracted law suits, these four were the only remaining heirs. John and Mary received their share and the amount for the two monks was held in trust by various family members. After the death of Mary in 1835 this money was passed to Rev. Charles Gordon, St Peter's, Aberdeen; he allotted it to Huntly for the support of the priest, four Masses to be said each year for the souls of Alexander, Cosmo, John and Mary.

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Greyfriars, Elgin.

Thirteen years before Columbus discovered America in 1492, a group of Franciscan friars erected a stone friary in the north of Scotland, just east of the Highlands in the city of Elgin. There they ministered to lepers, ran a thriving hospital and soup kitchen and sang the praises of God together. Before the end of the sixteenth century, however, the friary had been reduced to ruins by the effects of the Reformation in Scotland and all seemed at an end for Greyfriars Convent. In the mid-nineteenth century came the Catholic Restoration in Scotland and with it a group of Irish Sisters of Mercy who beheld the ruins of Greyfriars and dreamed of a new convent in its place. Their prayers to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour were answered in the person of Lord John Crichton-Stuart, a Scottish Catholic interested in restoring Scottish Catholicism, especially through its liturgy and architecture. He rebuilt Greyfriars convent according to the pattern of its original foundations and it served the Sisters of Mercy and their fruitful apostolate of education until 2010. At that time, the sisters had to withdraw from Greyfriars owing to decreasing numbers, leaving the property to the Diocese of Aberdeen.

Once again, the future of Greyfriars was uncertain. Upon his installation to the bishopric of Aberdeen in 2011, the Right Reverend Hugh Gilbert, OSB began to consider the possibilities for the future of the beautiful centuries-old building. He invited the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia of Nashville, Tennessee, to consider sending sisters to serve in Scotland, and to bring Greyfriars Convent to life once more. The Congregation accepted the invitation and on 20 August 2013 Greyfriars Convent began a new chapter in its history with the arrival of four sisters from the United States. When the convent was restored in 1898, two lovely paintings had been installed on the chapel's rood screen depicting Franciscans and Mercedarians, representatives of the two Orders which at that time had inhabited the building. As co-founder of the Mercedarians, the Dominican Raymond of Penyafort was painted into the scene. His black-and-white habit seems to have foretold the coming of the third religious order which would live in this hallowed place.

The sisters have been warmly welcomed both by the people of the diocese and by the local residents of Elgin. With its beautiful cloister walkways, monastic refectory, library, cells, and awe-inspiring chapel, Greyfriars convent is very conducive to living the Dominican life. The sisters have hosted a number of groups at the spacious convent, including Bible studies and catechist formation for adults, retreats and days of recollection for young adults and teenagers, catechesis for sacramental preparation, and weekend retreats for young women. The sisters have also visited schools, led parish retreats, and participated in Catholic events around Scotland. The Dominican charism of teaching finds a wide and varied scope in the diocese and the response has already been very positive.

As in times past, so today Greyfriars Convent seems poised to be a thriving centre for the life of the Church in the north of Scotland. We trust in God's Providence and look forward to working in this corner of His vineyard for the good of the souls so precious in His sight.

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A Visit to Scalan, June 2012

Everyone remembers when they first came across Scalan. In my case it was with a group of ramblers many years ago, coming up from the Well of the Lecht via a very steep slope over Carn Dulack, just below 2186 feet and then a steep descent that gradually eased off to a ruin at Clash of Scalan and thence to Scalan itself where my friends told me the amazing history of this special place. An unforgettable experience.

Sitting eating our sandwiches by the stream I tried to imagine what life could have been like here in the 18th century for the boys, young men and their masters forbidden by penal laws to study, teach or practice their religion. As we dropped down to the Livet and Chapeltown I made up my mind to find out more.

Today we are lucky to have the Blairs Museum booklet compiled by Alasdair Roberts "Scalan. Glenlivet' Hidden College 1717 -1799" and the internet allows us to read "The Story of Scalan for young people" by John Watts which I can recommend to all being now in my second childhood. A truly comprehensive account.

What a story! All those years under constant threat. If you did not, or could not, bring yourself to swear an oath to "deny, disown and abhor Rome and all its practices" - bad luck! If you were still a Catholic after age 15, there would be no estate for you. You were dangerous, a threat to Protestants and even to King James VI himself. On the other hand, help to discover or seize a priest and you got 500 merks in your hand. Infamous!

So how could the problem of teaching prospective priests be carried out in such a climate? Small enclaves of Catholics survived in remote areas of Scotland and one

such was in the country of the Catholic Gordon, Marquis of Huntly, in the upper reaches of Glenlivet, tucked into the foothills of the Ladder Hills, and it was here that a comparatively safe sanctuary was found to fit the purpose.

The house we see now is the last of many structures to occupy this secluded spot. A humble shieling hut sheltered a priest fleeing after the 1715 rising, then came George Innes who leased a small farm in 1717 and built a rough structure of stone, moss and heather near a well of spring water by the Crombie burn. The first college was born.

Secluded though it was it was never safe. Government soldiers and informers roamed the hills and glens searching for Jacobites and those protecting them. Scalan was violated and searched many times. Local people kept a look-out and gave warning to allow the occupants to melt away into the hills behind, taking precious items with them. The 1745 rising brought disaster when Cumberland's soldiers burnt Scalan to the ground. Hidden on the hillside the master watched the destruction, waited until all was quiet, then came down to reap the harvest and sow next year's crop. There was a man! Others less lucky faced prison, transportation or execution.

For the next twenty years a very humble building sufficed with danger everywhere. In 1748 Corgarff Castle, over in Strathdon, was garrisoned, posing a menace, and up on the Lecht, Charles Hay and five companies of men built the military road.

The situation did improve and when John Geddes arrived in 1762 he was able to build a new house on the other side of the burn. Over the years a chapel was added, then a kitchen wing forming a courtyard enclosed by a wall.

Scalan draws you back again and again, and in June last year a good friend suggested we might go back for another visit. Yes please! We arrived on foot, as you should, and stood before the house that John Geddes built in 1767. Saved on the point of collapse in 1948 the house was patched together, bought from the Crown Estate for £50 and then it inspired the formation of the Scalan Association which has continued work when possible. In 1996 this work received a bronze oak plaque from the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland.

Asked to write about our visit I thought it would be easy to dash off a few lines. How wrong I was! Standing before this wonderful little house there is such a mixture of emotions. What an amazing story of courage in adversity and just consider the characters that brought this place alive, some distinguished, their lives recorded and others for ever unknown. I entered Scalan feeling totally unworthy and move from room to room and up the stairs thinking about these people.

Priests, masters, boys from the age of 12, servants and the wonderful housekeeper who kept everyone fed while weaving red and blue tartan for the bishop and blue and black for the boys. Food came from farm and friends. One saintly bishop enjoyed chewing tobacco and perhaps some illicit whisky found the way in. There was plenty about!

But it was the boys who captured my imagination. Their education was free, their day divided into prayer, study, meals and meditation. Up at 5 or 6am (in later years aided by an alarm clock), a splash in the burn, then breakfast. They had to study so hard, though some may have enjoyed working out what happened next in an adventure story written in Greek or Latin. Even so it is a relief to learn that vigorous exercise was considered absolutely essential if the youngsters were to benefit from their schooling. That had a free period after dinner and supper, also all day Sunday after Mass plus one half day a week.

They could walk, run, climb the hills, and bathe in the dam up the hill with all around them the freedom of the countryside with deer, foxes, rabbits, trout in the stream and birds of prey overhead. In winter there were shuttlecocks to play with indoors but outside the snow would be an attraction for any boy. At 1257 feet above sea level there would be plenty of that! One might suppose the battle of Glenlivet, down the glen over 200 years earlier where greatly outnumbered Catholics overcame a Protestant army, might be fought once again with snowballs instead of artillery. Boys will be boys!

So I wandered around blessed Scalan. I said a prayer in the Chapel upstairs and came away with such a feeling of happiness. There is peace now at Scalan.

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Homily at the Annual Pilgrimage Mass, Sunday 6 July 2014.

Recently, on 24 June, we celebrated the Solemn Feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist. It is an indication of the centuries-long tradition of some of the Church's feasts, that 700 years ago, 24 June 1314, was the same feast-day. It was also the second and final day of the Battle of Bannockburn. Everybody seems to agree that on the morning of the second day the Scots Army were seen kneeling in prayer, but what recent glossy media productions failed to detail was that the Scots Army was actually attending Mass, praying for the legitimate freedoms of a nation. It paints a picture of a nation united around the Mass. Scotland was never more united in all its history than when the vast majority of its people knew and loved the Mass. There is nothing else in our history, neither political nor social, which has had the power to unite us as did the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In all our history, ancient and modern, there never was a greater gathering of Scots, for any purpose, than on 1st June 1982 when over 300,000 of us celebrated Mass with Pope St. John Paul II at Bellahouston Park in Glasgow. In more recent times, on 16 September 2010, the modern concerns of health and safety, security and anti-terrorism measures, (and no school holiday), still did not prevent 70,000 of us gathering again to celebrate Mass with Pope Benedict. There is nothing in Scottish History which has, so consistently, brought people together for over 1,600 years than the celebration of Mass the length and breadth of

our country.

There is another centenary being celebrated this year, but it will hardly receive as much media attention as Bannockburn. On Wednesday 6 August, a Mass will be celebrated, at 1.00pm, near to Eilean Bàn, an island on Loch Morar in the Western Highlands, to mark the foundation of the first seminary on Scottish soil in the year 1714. It had a short life. The next year, one of the better known Jacobite Uprisings took place and failed, and this brought a flood of Government soldiers, the “redcoats”, into the Highlands, wreaking widespread punitive destruction. The Church was a particular target, because it was a reasonable assumption that if you were a Catholic, you were also a Jacobite. The Loch Morar seminary was one among many victims. The Vicar Apostolic, the redoubtable Bishop James Gordon, looked to his kinsman, the Duke of Gordon, to provide a haven in his lands and so the seminary came here to Scalan.

What were these places for – Loch Morar and Scalan? They were places where the Mass could be celebrated safely, most of the time, but in secret. They were places where boys and young men were trained to be priests in Scotland, so that they could ensure that the Sacrifice of the Mass was not lost to the People of Scotland. Why was the Mass being celebrated in secret? Why was there danger of Scotland losing the Mass? The answer lies in the decisions of the Scottish Parliament – the previous one we had – which met in Edinburgh in the year 1560 and passed the first of the Penal Laws which prohibited the celebration of Mass in our country; priests were forbidden to be in the country at all, and clearly preparing people for the Priesthood was also illegal. The Mass was to be eradicated from Scottish society, the Mass which had been celebrated already for well over a thousand years in our land and which united Scots, men and women, like nothing else could. The seminaries at Loch Morar and Scalan came into being fundamentally to ensure the continued celebration of Mass in Scotland. The Mass was worth everything: existing here at Scalan in an illegal and clandestine way, risking arrest and violence; living out here in the middle of nowhere; being away from home and family; sharing cramped conditions with people not of your own choosing; accepting the horrendous weather – most years it was cut off by snow for at least a month, and, personally, I remember attending a committee meeting in this building in July one year and nearly succumbing to hypothermia! The Mass was worth that and a lot more inconvenience and difficulty. Here is a description of the circumstances in which Mass was celebrated about the year 1747, a few miles north of here, in the aftermath of Bonnie Prince Charlie’s 1745 Uprising. These are boyhood memories written up in later life by Bishop John Geddes, who built the building we have come to today:

The priest, he wrote, “*said Mass in various places, commonly in barns, and always in the night-time. Towards the end of the week, he bespoke some barn that happened to be empty, in a place proper for the meeting of the people in the night, between the approaching Saturday and Sunday ; and some trusty persons were sent to*

acquaint the heads of the Catholic families of this determination. On Saturday, when it was late at night, the Catholics convened at the appointed place; after midnight a sermon was made, Mass was said, and all endeavoured to get home before daybreak. These meetings were often very inconvenient, from the badness of the weather and of the roads, and from the people being crowded together without seats; but all was borne with great alacrity and cheerfulness. They seemed to be glad to have something to suffer for their God and for the profession of his holy religion."

Compare that with the couple I recently heard about who had attended Mass for decades, but it became necessary to change a Mass time in their parish from 10.00am to 10.30am. They stopped going to Mass. Why? Because the new time interfered with their normal arrangements for Sunday lunch! It must have been some lunch! Sadly, that kind of story is not uncommon. There are as many excuses for people not going to Mass as there are days in the year. I read only this week of two churches in the same town which may have to be merged, not Catholic, as it happens, but we have similar situations. A survey discovered that 80% of one congregation would not move to the other church. Attitudes towards the Mass have likewise seriously drifted away from attitudes of Faith. These poor attitudes spread from person to person until whole communities are affected. St Paul warns us in the second reading: **There is no necessity for us to obey our unspiritual selves or to live unspiritual lives.**

What would the young people who lived here make of it? Can you imagine a 21st century Catholic saying to a Scalan student: "I am a Catholic but I don't go to Mass"?; or "I am a Catholic: I go to Mass when it suits me"? I imagine a few of the boys throwing him, or even her, over there into the Crombie burn. There were no excuses here and no thought of them. Here there was an uncompromising love for the Mass, and without it, we might not have the Mass at all in Scotland today. There was here humble gratitude from uncomplicated people for the Mass Our Lord gave, and for them the Mass was everything. Our Lord says in today's Gospel: **I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children.** Can we not shake off our complicated attitudes, and embrace that same humble grateful love for this gift of the Mass which God has given us, and care for it with pride and faith and the same uncompromising love which the students at Scalan had? The Mass is our great family treasure which has been passed down through the generations to us. We received it in very good shape from our parents and grandparents. It is now our responsibility to see that we hand it on to the next generation in as good a shape as we received it. What efforts would you make for the Mass? How far would you travel, how much money would you spend, how many hours would you give up just to be sure of attending Mass at least each Sunday? These are questions which Catholics even in the towns and cities of Scotland will have to start asking themselves in the immediate future. When all is said and done, we will surely love the Lord by loving the Mass he gave us.

St. John the Baptist, to whom I referred at the beginning said of Our Lord: **He must increase: I must decrease.** This calls us to humility, to forget our own will in

order to do the Will of God. Faithfulness to the Mass is an act of obedience to his will for he said: **Do this in memory of me** – not a suggestion, not an invitation, but a command. It is the Mass which will help us win the battles we will experience - first of all within our own selves - but also help us to represent Christ our Lord courageously in today's world. The Mass was not given to us to make us feel cosy and comfortable in some kind of ivory tower disconnected from society. It is a launching pad from where we are propelled outward to proclaim Christ to the world around us. We are the ones Our Lord has baptised to take his message to the society in which we live, to our communities, our places of work, our own homes and families, and as Pope Francis likes to say, to the margins of our society. We are the ones who can attract people to Christ the Lord and bring his comforting message: **Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.** We are the ones who can help people to see that the yearnings they have for happiness, fulfilment and meaning will be satisfied when they give their lives over to the one who says: **Shoulder my yoke and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.** We are the ones who can teach people that the substitutes they have for God only do harm to mind and soul and body, and they need to turn to Christ who promises: **my yoke is easy and my burden light.** Our faithfulness to the Mass makes it possible for us to be servants of the world around us, bringing to the people of our time the message, the love and the person of Christ Our Lord.

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Some Account of the State of the Catholick Religion in Scotland during the Years 1745. 1746. & 1747. is the name of a 1794 manuscript which was brought together by Bishop John Geddes, containing his memories and those of others, including Bishop Hugh MacDonald, of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite Uprising and its aftermath for the Catholic Community. Naturally Scalan gets a mention, as does The Enzie and many other places in the North-East, the Western Highlands and The Hebrides. Fr. Michael Briody, our secretary/treasurer, has produced a 14-page booklet containing a transcription of the document with an introduction and explanatory footnotes. If you would like a copy, please send a cheque for £3 (incl. p+p) to Fr. Briody at the address given on page 3. Please make the cheque payable to "Rev. Michael Briody", and **not**, please, to the Scalan Association. If you wish to make a group order, please phone him on 01236 872537 to check on postal rates. This document was serialized in several parts in "Scalan News" over a number of editions ending about a year ago. The piece in different print at the top of page 18 is from the same manuscript.

The 68,000 word transcription of another manuscript of Bishop Geddes', mentioned in the last Scalan News, is not complete but is well on its way.



The Priests' Pilgrimage to Scalan took place on Wednesday, 3 September, the feast of Pope St. Gregory the Great.

