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Scalan News

Official Voice of the Scalan Association. Nov 2006 issue no. 33

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The ruined chapel of Scalan

The chapel in the north wing of Scalan was one of the last improvements, completed less than a decade before the college moved to Aquhorties.

The priests John and James Sharp were both at Scalan in the 1790s. James as Superior and John as Professor, moving in 1799 with the boys to Aquhorties. James remained at Scalan and when the entire farm was leased to him by the Duke of Gordon, he became the Duke's tacksman, paying rent to him, he himself collecting the rent of the small tenants. Mass therefore continued to be celebrated in the chapel at Scalan until he left in 1807, to become Procurator at Aquhorties,

There were other Mass centres in the Glenlivet mission throughout the 1700s. From the 1770s a priest was resident in the Tombae area from 1793 to 1812 Alexander Paterson.

The house at Scalan, vacated by James Sharp, was partially tenanted by Bishop Cameron's sister Helen until her death in 1832. The rest of it was offered to the tenant to whom the farm was sub-let but he failed to live there, using parts of it as a farm store. When James Sharp left, he was not replaced; Mass was to be celebrated there occasionally by Alexander Paterson from Tombae but this did not happen and the people of the Braes walked the seven mile round trip to the chapel at Tombae.

This changed with the opening of the church at Chapeltown in 1829 and in consequence Scalan was virtually abandoned and neglected by the church. James Sharp visited in the 1830s and his description of a broody hen having her nest on the altar in the deserted chapel, sadly suggests neglect and ruin. James Stothert, a convert and later a priest, visited in 1845, and gave a detailed description of the lay-out of Scalan before it was altered internally. He did not mention the chapel, only the dilapidated state of the main building, part of the ground floor used by an under-keeper of the Duke of Richmond, the rest as a potato store.

The chapel building with its thatched roof became home to Charles McHardie, shoemaker and his family until well into the 1920s. The last known person to inhabit the building was an old lady by the name of Mrs McGregor. By the time she left the thatch was disintegrating and the building in need of major repairs

Written by Ann Dean.

Gregory Farquharson: Schoolmaster and Jacobite

Amongst the heroes and heroines of penal times, schoolmasters deserve our special gratitude. One such was Gregory Farquharson, who taught very near to Scalán in the early years of the seminary,

Gregory Farquharson was the fourth son of Charles Bui Farquharson, a tenant on the Monaltrie estate about one mile from Ballater. The exact date of his birth is not known, but it was probably about 1690. We learn from the secular priest, James Carnegie, that Gregory was a convert to Catholicism, probably joining the Church in his teens. In March 1707, he went to the Scots College Paris along with Lewis Gray who was a nephew of the Principal, Louis Innes. Before going abroad, both students had spent six months in the Enzie studying under Bishop Nicholson and Bishop James Gordon.

On the way to Paris both students were detained at Calais (Gregory wrote "imprisoned") until they obtained a letter of clearance from Paris. We recall that this was only a year before the Franco Jacobite invasion of 1708, and conjecture that Scottish youths arriving in France could arouse suspicion as they were not always what they purported to be. The two students spent only two and a half years in the college. Lewis left shortly before Gregory, who wrote to Thomas Innes in the Scots College Paris from Rotterdam on the 2nd of October 1709 to let Thomas Innes know that he had failed to catch up with Lewis who had set sail from Rotterdam before Gregory arrived there.

One year later Gregory was at Traquair tutoring the two sons of the 4th Earl of Traquair, Charles and John Stewart who entered the Scots College Paris together in 1715 and later became respectively the 5th and 6th Earls of Traquair. Gregory wrote to Thomas Innes in 1710 giving some account of their character and behaviour. Gregory also tells Thomas Innes that the minister of Braemar had complained of him to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The minister had been visiting Traquair with another clergyman of his persuasion, and as Gregory came from Ballater, it is likely that he knew the Farquharson family, and so made some clamour about what Gregory was now doing. It is noteworthy that Gregory Farquharson at this time found it necessary to use an *alias* and signed himself "Charles Grant". In August 1713, Gregory Farquharson again wrote to Thomas Innes, this time complaining bitterly that he not received a letter from the college for two years, and he was particularly aggrieved that Thomas had not told him of the return to Scotland of George Innes who had been ordained in Paris in 1712. George, however, had contacted Gregory and the two had journeyed together to Deeside so that George could visit his father. Clearly they were close friends since their college days together, and later Gregory must have visited Scalán when George was rector, and Gregory taught in a nearby school.

The career of Gregory Farquharson from 1713 until 1724 has been very well outlined by John Watts in his book on Scalán. We are indebted to him for his research and his gracious permission to quote facts from his book. Bishop James Gordon determined to found a seminary in Morar on the island of Eilean Ban. His choice for rector was George Innes and it was for this purpose that George had been recalled from Paris. George, however, was found to be in a poor state of health, and so the bishop asked Gregory Farquharson to stand in as rector until a priest could be found. Gregory could not make up his mind. Although he wrote to Thomas Innes saying that it mattered little to himself where he was as long as it was where God wanted him to be, he delayed making a decision. Bishop Gordon was suggesting that he be succeeded at Traquair by one whom Gregory thought was out of favour with the Earl of Traquair. Moreover Gregory had high hopes of persuading Lord and Lady Traquair to send their sons to the Scots College Paris, and he did not want to see this plan jeopardised and he was probably reluctant to leave the comfortable post at Traquair for a temporary position. In March 1714, Bishop Gordon set out for Morar himself and the idea of Gregory's going there was abandoned. After Charles and John Stewart of Traquair left for Scots College Paris in 1715, Gregory went north and got a post teaching in the public school at Huntly. Here at Bishop Gordon's request he undertook the care of students who had promise of becoming seminarians. He may have enrolled these students in the public school at Huntly and supplemented Catholic religious instruction.

In the autumn of 1719 Bishop Gordon founded a Catholic school at Strands in Glenlivet and brought in Gregory Farquharson as master. Gregory was married by this time, and his wife looked after boarding students. The

boarders were absolutely necessary for survival. Not only did they provide extra money, but enabled the extension of the catchment area so that the school had pupils from the Western Highlands and from Aberdeenshire. Under Gregory's successor the school soon failed because the new master could not provide for resident students.

At least three students from Gregory's school went to the Scots College Paris. The first was John Gordon of Glencat who was at the Glenlivet School from summer 1720 until summer 1721. He was ordained deacon in Paris, but afterwards apostatised and wrote a diatribe against the Catholic Church. Later, however, he repented and did a lot of good for the Catholic Church by acting as an agent in London for Bishop Alexander Smith, the Vicar Apostolic for the Lowland District of Scotland. The second was Alexander Gordon of Coffurich who went to the Scots College Paris in 1724, was ordained priest at on 21 September 1734, and worked in the Scottish mission until his death in 1793. The third was John Gordon who learned Gaelic at the school. He went to Paris with Alexander Gordon in 1724, and was ordained alongside him at Scalán in 1734. Later in the 1750s he left the priesthood and eventually married. Others at the school included sons of Glengarry, Scotus, Belfinlay, Gordon of Minmore, Gordon of Letterfurie, (one of them, James Gordon became a successful wine merchant in Madeira), some Stuarts from Scalán Deeside and many other Highland young gentlemen.

Scarcely had the school started when the Church of Scotland took notice of it. A memorial written in 1720 complained bitterly about popish schools, and the first to be mentioned was that of Mr Farquharson at Glenlivet. In 1721 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland repeated the complaint, mentioning specifically Gregory Farquharson's school in Glenlivet at which was taught English, Latin and French. Gregory continued as master of this school until the summer of 1724 when he moved to Gordon Castle at Fochabers to become private tutor to the Duke of Gordon's eldest son, Cosmo, and Bishop Gordon moved the deacon Archibald Anderson from Scalán to replace Gregory as master of the Glenlivet School.

Cosmo Gordon, who had been baptized by Bishop Gordon, was only four years old in 1724, and so was starting his studies very young as was not uncommon in those days, but Gregory was only to be preceptor for four years, Cosmo's father, Alexander, second Duke of Gordon, died suddenly on 28 November 1728. Thereafter his wife, Henrietta Mordaunt, determined to bring up her family in the Protestant faith. The priest chaplain, Robert Gordon was expelled from the castle, Protestant tutors were found for the four sons, and Gregory must have lost his post. Either then or later he went back to Glenlivet and lived on a croft in Tombae where he raised his children, one of whom he named Cosmo after his former pupil who was now Duke of Gordon. It is most likely that Gregory resumed teaching in Glenlivet, but so far I have not found documentary confirmation for this.

Before the Forty-Five, Gregory was collecting cess and excise for the rebels. This is not surprising. The Scots College in Paris, where he had been educated, was fervently Jacobite, and its principal, Louis Innes devoted most of his time to the Stewart cause to which all the students were dedicated. Gregory Farquharson was out in the Forty-Five and was present on the battlefield of Culloden where he was taken captive. He was imprisoned in Inverness, and Bishop Geddes, writing 31 years later, believed that he died at sea while being taken as a prisoner to London. His death was certainly in May 1746. He died intestate, but his testament dative in the Commissariat Record of Moray, under the date of 21st August 1746, is interesting although it gives fewer family details than one would have expected. The executor is named as Hendred (and also as Henreit) Farquharson, married to John Cumming. She cannot have been Gregory's wife, and since Gregory's son, Cosmo was still alive and as she is named as next of kin, she was probably Gregory's daughter (Gregory called his son Cosmo after the Duke of Gordon, and it would appear that he called his daughter Henrietta after the Duke's mother.) One of the creditors is a Grigor Farquharson who might have been Gregory's son though he is not named as such. The livestock of his farm is given in detail; it comprised three old cows with two stirks, two old horses with one cracked filly, eleven old flocks [geese?], eleven old ewes with five lambs, and a two-year old filly. He also left corn from a croft, and eleven bails. Ostensibly Gregory's finances were in a sorry state. His effects were valued at only £159 while his debts amounted to £982. It is, possible however, that the bonds quoted in the testament as loans to Gregory Farquharson may in fact have been donations to the Jacobite cause since Gregory had been collecting cess and excise for the rebels. If this were the case, 1000 marks given by Cosmo, Duke of Gordon would be very significant. He was ostensibly a Hanoverian supporter and could not be persuaded by his younger brother, Lord Lewis to join the Forty-Five, but he may have contributed secretly to Jacobite funds either from a secret admiration or else to hedge his bets.

Although we have scant knowledge of the details of his life, Gregory Farquharson was highly regarded by the Catholic clergy, while the opprobrium of the Kirk shows that it regarded Gregory as a serious threat. Catholic schools were rare in penal times, and Gregory Farquharson must be regarded as a pioneer of Catholic education in

Scotland.

CANON BRIAN M. HALLORAN, PRESIDENT OF THE SCALAN ASSOCIATION.





Sandy's cottage

Sandy

For the first 18 years of my life, part of every summer was spent at the Braes, where my grandmother was born and had a holiday house. Sandy Matheson was the son of my grandmother's sister and so Sandy was a frequent visitor at our house and we were often at Scalan. The Sandy of my childhood was one of those rare adults who were "good with children". He didn't condescend, treat us like equals and was always willing to fix our bicycles

which always seem to arrive at Scalan with bits missing or broken. He told us stories of his own childhood. These stories made us wonder how he survived into adulthood as they usually featured some dangerous exploit, like racing my uncle down the hill at the Bridge of Brown on a bike with no brakes...no problem as he put his feet on the front tyre to slow down, the friction causing the soles of his shoes to produce smoke! He made us laugh as he described winning the slow bicycle race at the Tomintoul games.

He let us into his world as he pointed out interesting things, which we would have missed. His stories about the old days at Scalan had us enthralled. He would lay on a marvellous tea after our afternoon on the hill and encourage us to eat more and more when most adults usually told us not to be greedy. In later years, his ability to produce a marvellous spread, apparently without effort, in a house without electricity or running water, never ceased to amaze. Then my grandmother died and we no longer spent summers at the Braes.

Sixteen years passed and my summer visits started again. To my amazement, the years hadn't changed Sandy, he seemed exactly the same. I had changed and now saw sandy through adult eyes. I saw my own children respond to his qualities and I was able to appreciate why I found him so likeable when I was a child. I also saw things, as a child, I had missed, his keen intelligence and the way he applied this to his daily life.



Sandy was a natural scientist; he would observe some anomaly, form a hypothesis and then test this. He applied this approach to all sorts of situations on every visit Sandy had a new theory he was testing and he would describe it with enthusiasm. My favourite was the time he was testing his dog's intelligence: was its behaviour the result of thought or instinct? The foundation of his research methods were the simple science experiments carried out at Braes school. Sandy choose not to continue with formal education, but if he had chosen a different path in life he would surely have made his mark

Alongside this intelligence was great persistence... if he got his teeth into a problem he would not give up until it was solved. That was why he had such success with clocks. He had a thousand tiny pieces on the table but one piece was missing! The torch he produced for the search had to be wound to produce light, the faster he wound the brighter it shone. So the piece was found and Sandy took off his glasses to examine it. This was a different Sandy, with sharp intelligent eyes usually unseen behind his glasses

Sandy was a great observer of human behaviour. His talent for describing people and events which he had witnessed, often had one helpless with laughter. He told the story so well, his timing was perfect, the punch line always a joy! There was no malice in his observations, just a gleeful appreciation of the absurd.

He was a master of the art of conversation and was an asset in any company, always contributing some interesting slant on the topic under discussion. He was a true gentleman with perfect manner, always sensitive to the needs of others (people and animals). He was the only person I knew who, getting onto a stationary bicycle, would start with both feet on the pedals!

Gwynneth Lightbody.

Points of Interest

Mid June 2006. A pair of song thrushes successfully raised three chicks in the Scalan garden

June 20th 2006. A priest plus fellow Australians from a theological college in Victoria made the pilgrimage to Scalan to celebrate the Eucharist in the chapel. Two of the party had made the pilgrimage in June 2003 and hope to return

Early July. A family of stoats were seen leaving the track by Scalan at high speed disappearing into the gorse bushes.

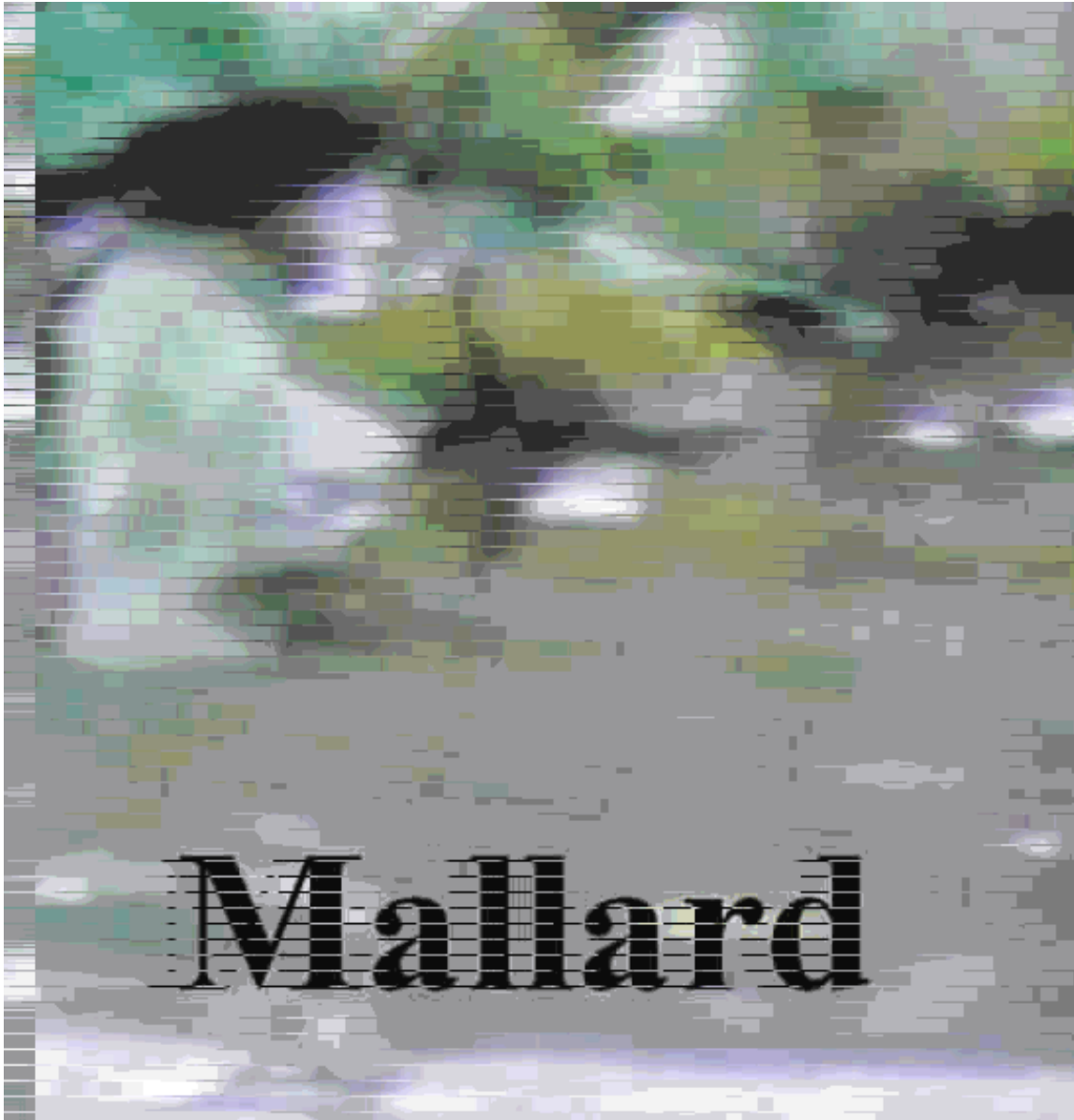
The rowan trees have a very heavy crop of berries this year; does this mean a hard winter?

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Reflections







When you walk to Scalan Seminary from Eskemullach car park, take time to look around you. Depending on the time of year, there are many things to see.

On your left is an old mill pond, overgrown but full of water; it stretches back from the fence and overflows into the ditch at the side of the track. In the winter it is home to mallards occasionally a

heron can be seen standing at the edge. In spring for about two days it is heaving with croaking frogs followed by frog spawn then tadpoles. A pair of Herons can sometimes be seen feeding on them. Spring is the time to see the brilliant yellow of the marsh marigold in the ditch followed by the paler yellow mimulus.





The track follows the edge of a well-established conifer wood, home to rabbits and roe deer. Wild flowers such as

ragged robin, campion and field orchid grow in the moist left side verge.



As you leave the wood, on your right, you can see Little Tom (hill) rising up from the flat ground. Immediately behind the wood is a flat, very boggy area mainly consisting of peat. About 25 years ago peat was hand cut, stacked and dried for fuel. Each croft had the right to cut peat from the "moss" to use on their open fires, their only means of heating and cooking. Derelict crofts can be seen in the distance but the majority are in ruins, heaps of stone mark their positions. Sheep and cattle graze the rough ground.

Wild flowers can be seen in the verges; heartsease, small yellow pansies, vetches and blue scabies to name a few. Birds circle and call far above. Peewits, curlews, oyster catchers and swallows can all be seen.





Old quarry s

lime kiln

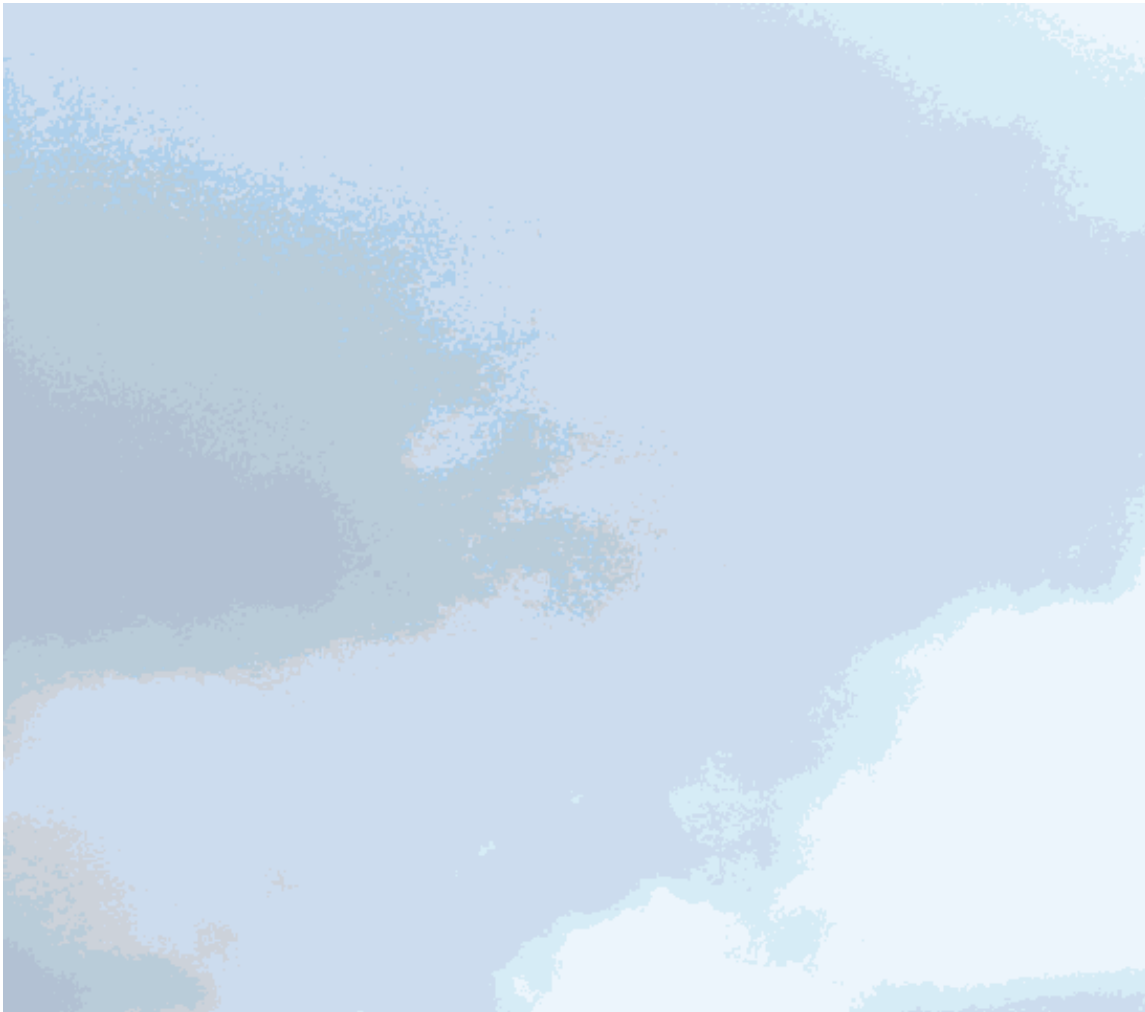






You pass through a field gate always kept shut to stop sheep "going walkabout". Just before the track swings right and on the top of the bank is an old lime kiln, the inside of which is a haven for wild plants such as ferns and wild violets. The lime was quarried on the side of Little Tom before being burnt in the kiln. A low stone wall runs along the bank and if you look down through the gorse you can see the Crombie Burn as it meanders through the rough pasture below. In the spring the gorse is a mass of yellow. The flowers of which can be used for wine. The bushes provide a haven for small animals. Rabbits can often be seen sprinting in and out.

Rowan trees grow close to the wall; the last tree, before the bridge, is huge consisting of about eight live branches and a number of dead ones. One trunk has fallen and provides a handy seat to rest on to "listen to the silence" and reflect on times past. From the tree can be seen present day Scalan with its backdrop of hills. Looking down towards the burn and to the right is a flat area above the "Bishop's Well", a natural spring. This is thought to be the location of the original College. The







turf house built in 1715 by the Reverent John Gordon (Cairnbarrow) for his own use and acquired by Bishop Gordon in 1716. Cairnbarrow was the name of his family's estate near Huntly. Even today people in the area are known by the name of their farms.

Scalan was originally a large area of summer grazing land known as a "sheiling", owned by the Catholic Duke of Gordon, and rented to Tomnalienan farm. All the farms still have the right to graze the hills.

Scalan, translated from the Gaelic sgárrth, shadow or shade, or from sgálan, a hut. Crude huts with no chimneys or windows built as shelters for those tending the grazing cattle.

The house that John Gordon built was on the sheiling ground on the west side of the Crombie. His first job would have been to clear the juniper bushes that covered the side of the hill and provided some grazing for black highland cattle. I have found no evidence of juniper in this area, only gorse but there are some at Corrunich towards Ladderfoot. These are fenced to protect them from grazing animals.

John Gordon's dwelling would have been typical of those in the area, a turf house easy to erect. A course of stones outlined the rectangular shape and formed the base for the walls. Rough hewn poles about five feet long were erected at six feet intervals between these, sods were tightly packed; holes were left for windows and a door. The stronger roof timber may have come from the Carrach's moss where trees lay submerged. Smaller timbers joined the pole to the wall frame. The roof was thatched with heather, rushes or both. A central hole was left to allow the peat smoke to escape. This fire was never allowed to go out and was considered to be the centre of life. Stones surrounded the fire and these supported pots, pans and of course a kettle. The home would always be smoky and, at times, probably choked you but it also killed bugs and beasts. The floor was beaten earth and the furniture very basic. Washing clothes and yourself was carried out in the burn; not a pleasant task in winter.

This small dwelling would have been extended when necessary. The first extension would be to house a milk cow and chickens. Scalan was both a college and a working farm. At an early date a piece of land was granted to the Seminary on the east side of the Crombie by the Duke's Factor. This was suitable for grazing.

It is unclear how many buildings were in the vicinity but it was known as Scalan town in 1720 indicating a number of dwellings in close proximity sharing land worked in the runrig system. The community seemed to be self-sufficient and there is mention of a smith, wheelwright, a cobbler, who also tanned hides, joiner, weaver, tailor and a teacher who only taught reading because she could not write. Milling was carried out at Refreish. Candles were made in November when the cattle were slaughtered.

Reflection makes one realise we cannot comprehend how people lived in the early eighteenth century. It was a very hard existence but people cared for each other, family bonds were very strong. The Crombie Burn and the contour of the hills are changeless, but the trees, plants, birds and animals, like the people change with the years. The old rowan tree with the built-in seat provides red berries for the birds to feast on in the autumn. The sheep that graze the rough pasture collect round the tree. In summer it provides shelter from the sun, in the winter helps to cut the bitter winds and snow.





This tree still stands but if you look towards Scalan to the rowans planted by Bishop Hay many have fallen. You can still see the outline of the old garden, but for how much longer?

Scalan stands alone, a place of pilgrimage. A place to reflect on the people who once endured so much to keep the Catholic faith alive. Looking back is easy, but going forward is thwarted with difficulties which can be overcome if we have the faith of past generations.

Annual General Meeting

Presidents Report

As the weather was very good at our last A.G.M. we celebrated Mass in the outdoor chapel. We believe this may be the first Mass celebrated there for two hundred years. The annual Mass on the first Sunday in July was very well attended, and Father Joseph Toal preached the sermon.

The visitor's book shows that individual and small groups continue to be regular visitors, and the Moray Society held an open day at Scalan on 24th September 2005.

Mrs Elizabeth Beaton heard from Moray Council Planning Department that we could proceed with the restoration of the original access to Bishop Hay's room, and Mr. Toovey has removed the partition that was blocking the entrance. We are grateful to Mrs. Beaton and Mr. Toovey. We would also like to record our thanks to Mr. Thomas Christie for restoring the chapel wall. Unfortunately there has been further wall fall this year which we hope to attend to as soon as possible.

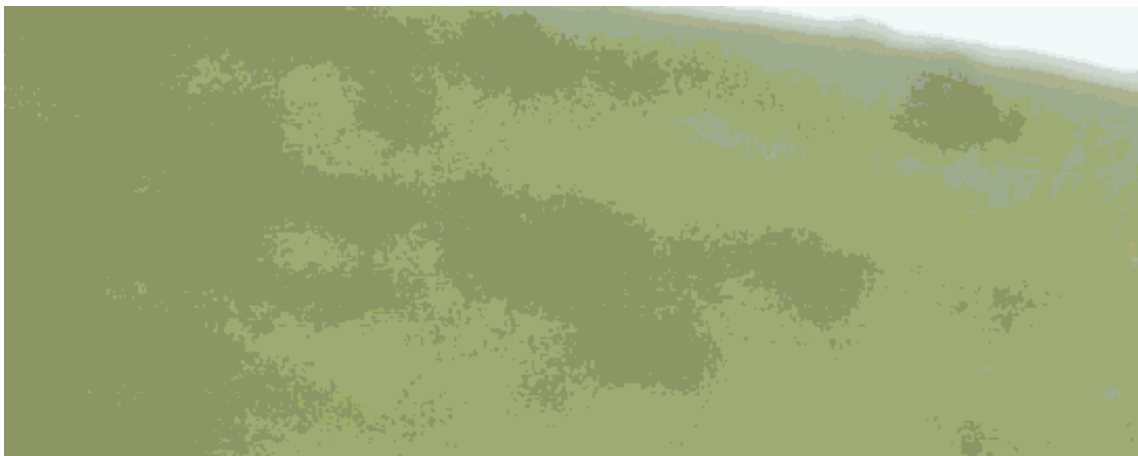
Negotiations with the Crown Estates to get a lower buying price for Sandy's old house are still ongoing, the latest contacts being by telephone with Mr. Alan Laidlaw in Edinburgh last Friday and yesterday. I suggested that we might be content to buy Sandy's house and the stone shed and the ground in between, without the seven acres, hoping this would considerably reduce the price, Mr. Laidlaw said that it did not always work that way, and at the time of writing there has been no reduction of the price of £135,000.

Canon Daniel Boyle died on 14th February 2006. May he rest in peace.

I would like to thank Mr. & Mrs. McEwan for their hospitality at committee meetings, Mrs Sylvia Toovey and her editorial team for producing the newsletter, Mr. Toovey for general maintenance and vigilant watch over the building, and the Scalan committee for their dedication and work.

Very Reverend Brian M. Canon Halloran.

Annual Scalan Mass 2 July 2006









True to tradition the annual Mass was held on the first Sunday July. The weather was warm and dry; the threatening rain not materializing. Midges were a slight problem and quite a number of people could be seen scratching, and rubbing their hands and faces. It would take many more "wee beasties" to spoil this annual pilgrimage and Mass. It certainly didn't detract from the splendid piping of Jimmy Stuart. More than 200 pilgrims attended from near and far, including two ladies from Guatemala who were on holiday in East Kilbride. The Music was provided by parishioners of St Peter's, Buckie as in recent years and at the Mass we remembered their parish priest, Mgr Edward Traynor, who died in March 2006.

The main celebrant of the Mass was Canon Brian Halloran, president of the Scalan Association. The other priests present were Frs. Gerry Livingstone (Buckie), Mark Impson (Keith), Jim Thomson (Stepps), Michael Briody (Moodiesburn), John Kelly (Coatbridge), Roger Hickley (Cape Town, South Africa, helping out in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles for a couple of months), Canon Donald Mackay (Oban), Canon John Angus MacDonald (Kingussie), and Monsignor John McIntyre (Baillieston), who preached the homily.

Taking as his text the first words of the Sunday Liturgy, "**Death was not God's doing**", Mgr McIntyre spoke of the faith of the Resurrection and the life to come which we share with those who lived and worked and prayed in the little College of Scalan.

He spoke in particular about Bishop Hay, and the time when he combined the Scalan Rectorship with his Episcopal duties: a time when the faith that had built those walls seemed vindicated by the progress and well-being of the community which Hay guided

Yet that progress of the 1790s took place against a dark background of irreligion and calamity of the Church itself, the loss of our foreign colleges being among the many sacrilegious outrages of Revolutionary and Napoleonic times. Hay himself spoke of portents of the final times, and by the time he had built his new Scalan at Aquhorties, the Pope and Church seemed to have no future but as puppets of Bonaparte.

When tempted to lose heart because of the irreligion and difficulties of our age, we can think of those times of darkness and pray for a share of the faith and fortitude which inspired the men and women of two centuries ago.

We were indebted as usual to the local Scalan Committee and their helpers who made all the necessary practical

arrangements for the Mass.

Rev. Michael Briody.







Scalan from Carn Mhor showing outline of the Bishops Walk and the Scaln croft

They are happy, who dwell in your house,

for ever singing your praise.

They are happy, whose strength is in you,

In whose heart are the roads to Sion.

Psalm 83 Verses 5 &6

Copies of photos used may be obtained from the editor with a donation to The Scalan Association. Please state size. (up to A4)