

Scalan News

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Poem: A Braes Visitor = attributed to Robert Lamb

Pluscarden Abbey

The persistence through time of the Church is a mark of recognition of its divine origin in Christ, founded on the rock of St. Peter's faith that the Lord has prayed shall not fail. Scalan's persistence through time in its visible artefacts and the inspiration of its ethos symbolises this in some little way in the North of Scotland and for the wider Church. In a similar way Pluscarden Abbey symbolises this same persistence through time and its modern "Resurrection" (like the Benedictine equivalent of the Society of Jesus!) is a sign that at any moment the Lord can breathe life into seemingly dry bones. (see Ezekiel 37.4 and following)

Pluscarden Abbey as we know it today owes its foundation to King Alexander 11 of Scotland in the year 1230. At the same time grants were made to two other sister houses, Beaulieu in Ross, and Ardchattan in Argyll. The community that served these churches was one of Valliscaulians, a little-known order that shared some of the strictness of the Carthusian discipline with the spirit of fellowship that existed among the Benedictines, and only at these three places was this order represented in Scotland or England.

The parent house in France, the Priory of Vallis Caulium, had been founded just over thirty years earlier and the original brethren from France must surely have found in Pluscarden, an echo of their own situation, and densely forested hill.

In fact an old name for the Pluscarden valley, the Kail Glen, is nothing more than a translation into Scots of the French Val des Choux or the Latin Vallis Caulium. Apart from this link of geographical similarity, there is reason to believe that the site of Pluscarden had had religious associations long before 1230 and that a hermit's cell and a well dedicated to St. Andrew may

have been situated here; and certainly the dedication of Alexander II's Priory was to the two patrons of the Order, St. Mary and St. John the Baptist, as well as to St. Andrew.

However, despite its parental ties with France, the history of Pluscarden is very much concerned with Scotland's own affairs. The remoteness of its situation and the slender administrative links with the original foundation meant that the Priory went largely its own way until in 1345 when it came under the immediate surveillance of the Bishop of Moray whose seat at Elgin Cathedral had been founded also by Alexander I seven years before Pluscarden. Both before and after the change in ecclesiastical authority, the Priory buildings had suffered by attack. In 1303 the armies of Edward I of England had ravaged the Province of Moray and Pluscarden had suffered damage, but much more serious than this was the assault according to history led by the Wolf of Badenoch in 1390. The powerful man, Alexander Stewart, illegitimate son of King Robert I, held the appointment of King's Lieutenant north of the Forth. But his judicial authority was disputed by the Bishop of Moray, and the long-standing quarrel between the two men came to a head in this fateful year of 1390 when the Wolf swept down from his Badenoch fastness upon the coastal plain of Moray, firing the town of Forres, and the town and Cathedral of Elgin. It therefore seems probable that the Priory of Pluscarden, now under the Bishop's protection, was burned at the same time and today we can still see traces in the Abbey buildings of a fire of about the 1390s.

The next date of significance in the history of Pluscarden is the year 1454. From its foundation until this year the names of eleven Priors are recorded as well as numerous grants of land, of mills and of fishing's on the Spey. But despite this apparent prosperity the decision was taken in 1454, probably for economic as well as political reasons, to unite the house of Pluscarden with that of Urquhart Priory, an ancient off-shoot of Dunfermline Abbey five miles east of Elgin, that could look back in history a whole century before Pluscarden. Administratively, the Urquhart brethren transferred to Pluscarden and ecclesiastically, this date marks the disappearance from Moray of the white habits of the Valliscaulians and their replacement by the black dress of the Old Benedictines of Dunfermline and Urquhart. More than this, we can detect the influence of Dunfermline today in the characteristic design of certain later windows and other details in the monastic buildings as they survive.

After this union of the two houses, a further seven Benedictine Priors bring us up to the last: Alexander Dunbar, Prior of Plus card en from 1533 to 1560. Dunbar, like his contemporary and neighbour, Patrick Hepburn of Elgin Cathedral, had the foresight to anticipate the events of the Reformation in Scotland and appears to have brought under his direct control Priory funds and Priory lands in favour of his own family. He died in the winter of 1560/61 but records show that some monks continued in decreasing numbers to inhabit the Priory buildings until almost the end of the century, under the authority of the lay Commendator, Alexander Seton, Lord Urquhart.

There now ensues a long period of eclipse in the religious history of Pluscarden. As a lay property it passed through various hands; in 1594 Lord Urquhart sold the lands to Kenneth Mackenzie of Kintail, a Privy Councillor of King James VI, and the estate remained with the Mackenzies for seventy years. In 1662 it passed to the Brodies of Lethen, a neighbouring family and from them to the family of Duff who eventually became Earls of Fife. In the

obscurity of these centuries of domestic change we get occasional glimpses of light: Alexander Brodie records in 1680 how he went to Pluscarden at night: "we went thorough' that old ruined Palace and did see the vestiges of a great old building and edifice"; and seventy years later there is a tradition that an old Mrs Gordon of Westerton used to go alone, save for a serving girl, to the Priory ruins and worship privately there. At one point in the 18th century, former granary buildings near the East Gate, once called the Old Ha, were used for local worship and in 1821 Lord Fife carried out some alterations in the original calefactory of the Priory Church to make that apartment suitable for use as the local Free Church. Finally, parts of the Priory Church continued to be used as a burial place by local families. Apart from these moments of occasional activity, the Priory buildings stood unmaintained against the weather; roofs collapsed and ivy grew upon the walls, woodwork rotted into mould and rubble accumulated in the church and cloisters where once the monks had walked.

Life started again for Pluscarden in 1948. The property had passed in 1897 from the Earls of Fife to the third Marquis of Bute and from him to his son, Lord Colum Crichton-Stuart, and it was he who in 1943 gave the Priory and its land to the Benedictine community of Prinknash, originally an Anglican Benedictine community who were received into the Roman Catholic Church as a community in 1913. The Marquis of Bute had already put in hand the work of preservation, but following the re-establishment of the Benedictines at the Priory more ambitious restoration was commenced. The community were able to take up residence there by 1948 and seven years later the central tower of the church had been roofed and the bells of Pluscarden once again rang across the valley. Independence was granted in 1966 and in 1974 the monastery was elevated to the status of an Abbey. The story of Pluscarden is by no means finished. Today we see it as a thriving house, a training place for Novices and a place of worship, work and reflection. The physical labour of re-building goes on and when time and funds permit, we shall eventually see a monastery restored to its former glory yet fitted as a religious house of the twenty-first century.

Already having become an Abbey after seven centuries as a Priory and now recently cross-fertilising the Diocese by providing its Abbot Hugh Gilbert as Bishop of Aberdeen, a second Pluscarden bishop in the diocesan history, who can doubt that Scalan's and Pluscarden's intertwining histories may now perhaps interlink into a cross-fertilised Resurrection and a new and undreamt-of spiritual flowering for each and for both ... and for Scotland? Thanks are to God!

Annual Pilgrimage to Scalan, 3 July 2011

The Annual Mass took place as usual in the courtyard at Scalan. It stayed dry, despite ominous clouds, the wind was light, and the midgies not too much of a problem. There was a good crowd at the Mass, roughly 200 people with, as usual, a strong contingent from the Lanarkshire area.

Bishop Toal, from the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, was the main celebrant and he gave the homily based on the life and times of Alexander Cameron, SJ. Concelebrating the Mass were Archbishop Conti from Glasgow, Mgrs. Halloran, WYllie and McIntyre, Canon Judge, Father

Barnett, SJ, Fathers Thomson, Briody and Walls, and Deacon Vincent McQuaid.

The walkers up to Scalán from Eskiemulloch were met by the evocative sound of pipe music, provided each year by Jimmy Stewart, and the congregation were assisted in their sung responses and hymns by the musical accompaniment of Alec Main's Buckie Group.

In the periods of silence during the Mass, the swallows swooped overhead, and their voices could be heard joining the voices of curlew, oyster catcher and lapwing .

... contributed by Ann Dean.

Bishop Toal's homily at Scalán on Sunday July 3, 2011

The Parish Priest of St Margaret's, Roy Bridge, Mgr Thomas Wynne, after years of honing his literary skills on the weekly parish bulletin, recently published a little book entitled "The Forgotten Cameron of the '45 - The Life and times of Alexander Cameron SJ". Since the life of this Scottish Jesuit priest coincided with Scalán's seminary life, I read Mgr WYllie's book over the last few days with an eye on what I might say today.

The story of Fr Cameron is interesting in itself - he was a member of the family of the Chief of the Camerons of Lochiel, Episcopalians and strong Jacobites. After spending a number of years on the continent in France and Italy, sometimes in the service of the exiled Stuarts, he converted to Catholicism, joined the Jesuits, and after his ordination as priest in 1741 returned to Scotland to minister in the Strathglass Mission along with his fellow Jesuits John and Charles Farquharson under Bishop Hugh MacDonald. His work on the Mission was curtailed with the arrival of Bonnie Prince Charlie in Scotland and the raising of the Jacobite Standard at Glenfinnan. The Camerons rallied to the Prince's cause and Fr Alexander joined their ranks, along with the Bishop and a good number of his priests. As chaplains to the Jacobite army they accompanied the clansmen through the whole campaign, ending as it did with the defeat at Culloden and all its terrible consequences. In the aftermath many who had fought or supported the Jacobite cause were rounded up and taken on prison ships to the Thames, including 12 priests we recall also that Scalán was eventually attacked and burnt to the ground. One of the priest prisoners was Alexander Cameron, who because of his family connections and the brutality of the captain of HMS Furnace, on which he was kept a prisoner, was particularly ill-treated and died because of this on 19 October 1746. A sad story therefore of a time when Catholics could still be persecuted for their faith and priests ran the risk of imprisonment, ill-treatment, and perhaps death. It has to be admitted at the same time that to rebel against the state at any time is likely to bring down heavy punishment on those whose rebellion fails and this was certainly the case for the Highland Jacobites - it is not surprising that some priests were among those who died as prisoners in such terrible conditions or, having survived imprisonment, were banished from Scotland.

For the small Catholic community in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands, the disruption after the failed rebellion, and the loss of some of its priests, must have been truly severe, and the repression which followed changed many communities forever. Those who were left

though did not give up, and indeed the Catholic Church continued to survive and in fact to grow again even in such adverse times the rebuilding of Scalan in the next decade and the steady increase of students studying here for the priesthood is testimony to that, as also were the attempts to keep a small seminary running through the remainder of the 18th century in the Highlands District. In those moments of trial and repression people are quite resilient in regard to holding on to what is dear to them, particularly their religious faith, and are prepared to make great sacrifice in the face of enforced hardships.

Such has been the history of the Church through the centuries and in many different places - indeed from the time of the apostles Peter and Paul, and the first martyrs of the Church of Rome, whose feast days we celebrated in recent days, up until our own times. We often hear or read today of places where there is some element of persecution suffered by those who wish to remain faithful to their Catholic faith and are discouraged or prevented from doing so, or even imprisoned and tortured if they dare to insist on their right to religious freedom.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has reminded us on occasions of the suffering of the underground Catholics in China, who wish to remain in communion with the Bishop of Rome; the difficulties of Catholics in Pakistan and some other countries with oppressive laws were highlighted earlier this year when their most prominent Catholic politician, Shahbaz Bhatti, was gunned down for seeking some change in the blasphemy laws; it is not uncommon to hear of violence against Christians erupting in different parts of the world, sometimes due to religious tensions, sometimes due to corrupt and oppressive regimes who resent any criticism of their unjust practices. Wherever persecution exists we abhor it and we pray for an end to all religious discrimination and for those who suffer today for their faith.

We continue to admire their courage and steadfastness, especially when violence erupts and deaths ensue. For those in such circumstances Our Lord's words in today's gospel must surely bring some comfort:

"Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light".

What about ourselves here in Scotland? Some debate in recent times has focussed on the issue of sectarianism and the need to eradicate it completely from Scottish society. It is likely that where it does exist it retains an element of anti-Catholicism but I think most of us feel now that as Catholics we are very much part of Scottish society and that our contribution, particularly in education, is more valued rather than criticised or seen as a source of division. Probably though there may still be some sense that you are tolerated as long as you don't rock the boat, or say too much, but perhaps that applies more and more to other Christians as well, in our more secular society of today. It is important though that we do witness to our Christian beliefs and uphold them in our own way of living and in the public forum - the protection of human life from its first moments to its natural end, the honouring of marriage and stable family life, the necessity of structured education in the Christian faith, being part of a worshipping Christian community in which we hear the Gospel proclaimed and are in communion with the Father through Christ Our Lord, the need to care for our neighbour and

to show our Christian faith in deeds as well as in words.

Some words from Pope Benedict's homily at Bellahouston last September highlight our responsibilities in Scotland today:

"I appeal in particular to you, the lay faithful, in accordance with your baptismal calling and mission, not only to be examples of faith in public, but also to put the case for the promotion of faith's wisdom and vision in the public forum. Society today needs clear voices which propose our right to live, not in a jungle of self destructive and arbitrary freedoms, but in a society which works for the true welfare of its citizens and offers them guidance and protection in the face of their weakness and fragility. Do not be afraid to take up this service to your brothers and sisters and to the future of your beloved nation".

In serving God well, and in living our Christian faith to the full, we are also bringing his goodness to our neighbour and keeping the flame of Christian life and service alive in our country. We need to value this and hold on to this sense of serving our society, our country, our world, through Christian commitment and the full use of our God-given talents to do good works. St Paul's words today reflect (working of the Spirit of Christ in each of us. Through openness to the Spi spiritual realities we are made capable of bringing the spiritual to every as} life and all that we do, so that the whole of our lives become a spiritual offe the Father. Listen again to St Paul's thoughts:

"Your interests are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit c has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Chr would not belong to him, and ifthe Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the c living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you".

The Spirit of Christ is living in each one of us - our bodies, our hearts, ou are alive with his grace, and we are thus empowered to do the work of Christ homes, in our work places, in our community activities, in our interest and c for our country and our world today. We gather here at Scalan, honouring t] pose this building served in fostering and rebuilding the Catholic presence world today. We gather here at Scalan, honouring the purpose this building in fostering and rebuilding the Catholic presence in Scotland in very chall(times, and the people who lived, worked and studied here, so enthuse Christ's Spirit as they rebuilt after failure and destruction, showing such stn plication and determination to provide new generations of priests to serve Scottish Mission. That was their particular task, and in one sense it was v cused on the students who came here, as indeed seminaries still have to what was being done in this quiet corner of Glenlivet was to benefit others, particular the still barely tolerated groups of Catholics sparsely spread across land. Each of us in our own small environment serves the Lord in a similaJ filled way, and we pray and trust that we in our turn will produce good fruit Church and Scotland today.

It is particularly important that we pray here at Scalan for vocations to the hood. In our Diocese of Argyll and the Isles we celebrated the ordination 0: priest recently - Fr David Connor - and last week a new priest - Fr Do Zavre was ordained for Aberdeen Diocese. For both of them and for the serr and parishes and communities who have supported them on the way to prie it has been a big effort to get to priesthood, and it is the same with each pers,

presents themselves as a possible candidate for the priesthood. We need to be aware of this, that it is not an easy thing to become a priest - it wasn't two centuries ago and it isn't now. Each person who comes forward needs all the support of prayer and encouragement which we can muster and in our parishes ecclesiastical gatherings we need to pray constantly for vocations and for those who are preparing for priesthood. Let us make that one of our purposes then in attending yearly Mass at Scalan but let us not forget to continue our prayers when we are here, and if we know somebody studying to be a priest let us offer him every assurance of our appreciation and the support of our prayers. The same support is equally necessary also for those who are priests, and especially those who have even many long years in parish ministry and caring for their people in all their spiritual, and sometimes material needs.

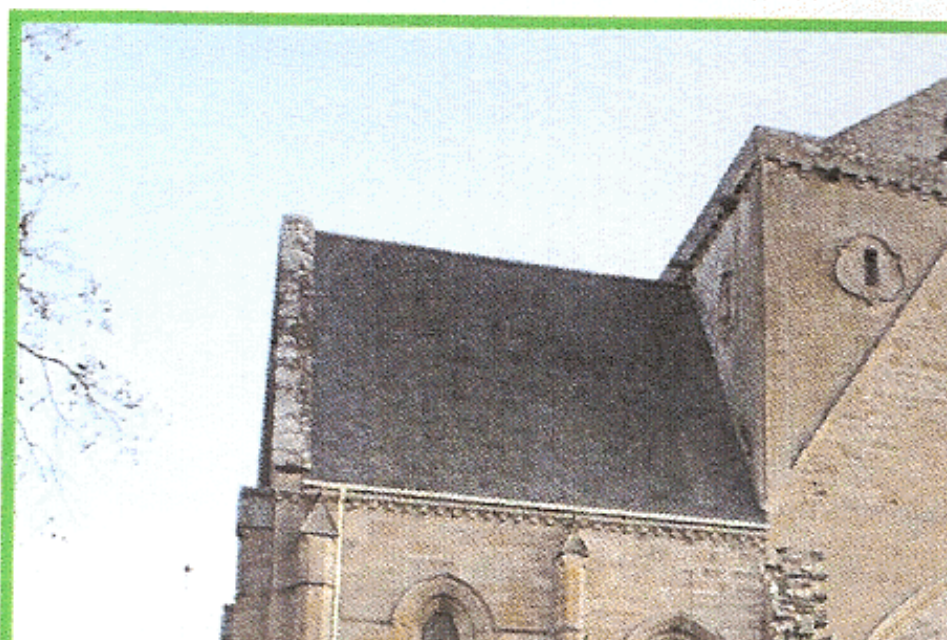
Joking back to the priest I started talking about - Fr Alexander Cameron - in a sense it was a waste that he was lost to the Scottish Mission after only four years of ministry in Scotland. The circumstance of the day brought about his "early" death but these circumstances too have brought his memory alive for us once more. The call of Christ that he heard and responded to so willingly is still alive in the Church today, and it is our fervent prayer that the call will continue to be heard in Scotland and that many other young men will respond as did Alexander Cameron and those who came to study here at Scalan. May the Lord truly bless us in his way and keep us all faithful in his service.

by kind permission of Bishop Toal.





Plusca





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**Annual Pilgrimage Mass
Principal Celebrant and Homilist**

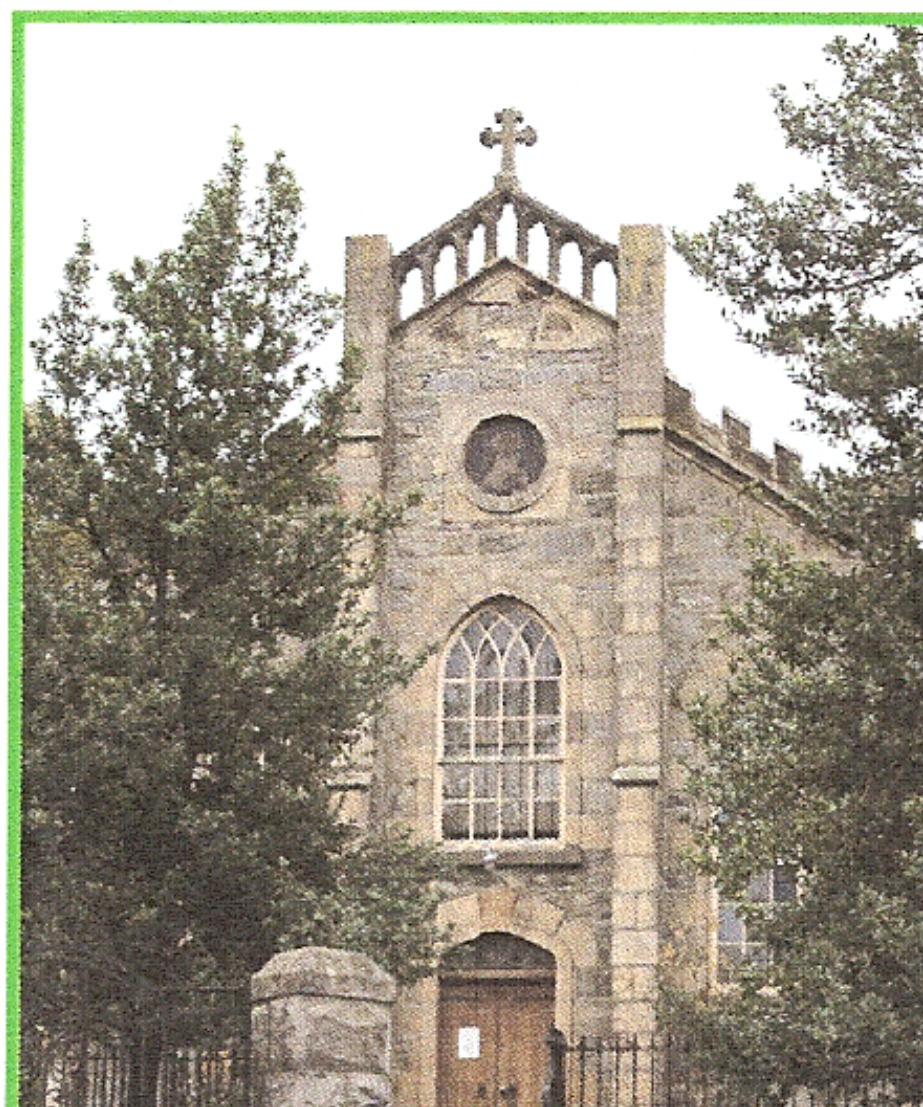




Figure 1: A person in a green jacket holding a small dark object.



Figure 2: A large tree in front of a building.





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The congregation at the A





R.I.P.

The deaths occurred recently of Bill McEwan, husband of Jane, our long-standing treasurer-secretary, who herself died in January 2010, and of Bishop John Jukes, emeritus auxiliary bishop of Southwark who took on the role of parish priest of Huntly in his retirement. A fuller note on both will be included in the next newsletter. May they both rest in peace.

Points of Interest

The majority of Scalan members know that Scalan cottage which is said to have been built on the old Seminary kitchens was purchased from the Crown Estates on the death of Sandy Matheson, the last resident of Scalan town. The land and buildings were leased from the Crown and now fenced alongside Scalan. The cottage is undergoing major renovation using local labour. The aim is to make the building litable for meetings, with very basic facilities to make tea. There is an outside tap for water but providing electric and toilets is well into the future. As you know Seminary has toilets and caters for the disabled.

The cottage is now picked and pointed and the extension floor is concreted an new door and corrugated roof will shortly be in place making a good place to sit benches and chairs. Unfortunately when the ivy was removed from the outside leaning chimney stack was exposed. This is to be carefully removed and rebuilt the stonemason who carried out the excellent work on the walls. When peat is continually burnt on fires, the acid smoke eats into the old lime mortar causing extensive damage.

2. The book Bishop Toal based his homily on is 'The Forgotten Cameron of the 45: The life and times of Alexander Cameron'. The Author is Mgr. Tom Wynn Parish Priest of St. Margaret's, Roy Bridge. Telephone 01397 712238 or Email ftom@rcroybridge.co.uk.

3. Despite the poor weather quite a number of visitors visited Scalan. Comments in the visitor's book- bleak, wet and windy, smashing place, eerie, serene and peaceful. One group visited with Canon Patrick McNally from St. Columba's, Cupar, in Fife. There were about fifty five mums, dads, children and one disabled lady. The sun shone, Mass was held outside and Canon

McInally used the Old chapel wall as an altar. Seats were provided for those that didn't want to stand. The children played in the crystal clear burn before settling down to a picnic on the grass. One parishioner provided ice-cream; another miniatures of whisky. A day to remember!

4. Two other large groups; one from Canada and the other from Banff didn't have such good weather but visited Scalan and the Braes church 'Our Lady of Perpetual Succour'. In both cases there was a person on hand to give a talk and answer questions.

5. A sculpture dedicated to Peter Anson was unveiled in May at MacDuff's Crook of Ness Maritime garden. He was a writer and artist and is credited with visiting Scalan a number of times. He did a pen and ink of the Seminary which was used as a postcard. This can be seen in Bishop Hay's room with many other pictures. He is mentioned by Ann Dean in her article "Dufftown and Aberlour Churches".

Peter Anson wrote of Scalan: "It was sad to find this venerable sanctuary in such a neglected state. For over a century it has been used as a farm, and its present condition is a reproach to its owners. It is a pity that Scalan cannot be purchased by the Scottish bishops and put to better use. For it is a witness to the fidelity and loyalty of Scottish Catholics during the worst times of persecution. Moreover Scalan tells to those outside the Fold of Peter that Catholicism in modern Scotland (1938) is not an alien religion imported from Ireland as many of them would have us believe. I made two sketches of the building and it was nearly dusk by the time I got back to Tombae."

These gentle comments by Peter F Anson when combined with his early drawings show us his early influence in the decision to repair Scalan and form the Scalan Association. In this instance he was a catalyst perhaps who prompted the formation of the Association who then carried forward to the near-complete repair today.

Peter Anson had so many strings to his bow that nowhere I feel is his work completely available and a summary of his work in a catalogue form would be a help. I have built on other holdings and placed links at: www.peteranson.info

The copyright of his work is with the current Abbot of Nunraw Abbey where he died in 1975. At present I am building a catalogue of his work and would encourage anyone who can contribute to contact me at morrison@peteranson.info

Dufftown and Aberlour Churches.

In the last Scalan Newsletter, there was an article about the Cabrach Mission, beginning in 1731 and finally moving into Dufftown with the priest George Gordon in 1825. He had earlier acquired from the Earl of Fife two feus with three acres of land attached in the growing village of Dufftown, and it is here that he, with the help of Dr Kyle, planned and built St Mary's Church. Called originally St Bean's, the patron of the parish, it was not until 1857 that the church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. George Gordon is remembered today for his love of music and its use to enhance the liturgy. He compiled two volumes of 'Sacred Music for the use of Small Choirs' which were very popular throughout the north-east and he

enriched the church with an organ. He retired in 1848, remaining in Dufftown and died in 1856.

He was succeeded briefly by John Gallagher and then in 1850 by another much loved priest John Kemp who worked for his Church and his parish with the same fervour as his predecessor George Gordon. During his time he enlarged and beautified the church and presbytery and built Dufftown's first Catholic school. He longed for St Mary's to have an order of teaching nuns and a convent was built for them adjoining the church, but they never came. He retired in 1876, with assistants William Farquharson and William Fraser helping him during the last four years. Between 1876 and 1905 there were four priests, Frs. William Fraser, 1876-91, James McGregor, 1891-95, Alexander Gerry, 1895-99, and Donald Chisholm, 1899-1905.

Then came Fr. George Paul Shaw who was parish priest until 1930. He realised the need for a church in Speyside to serve the Catholic population between Grantown and Rothes and acquired a piece of land from Grant of Wester Elchies. On the 8th July 1909, the Church, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was opened. It was still served from Dufftown until 1918 when the first resident priest was appointed, John McBain, there until 1933. Following him were Alexander Kerr, 1933-41, James Marr, 1941-47, Robert Mann 1947-52, and James McLaughlin, 1952-60. This small, lovely church is situated high up above Aberlour with wide views across the Spey valley. The interior fittings are of pitch-pine and the sanctuary is divided from the nave by a simple rood screen, surmounted by a calvary.

In 1826, Fr. George P Shaw, now with a lighter work load at Dufftown, published his book *An Old Story of a Highland Parish*, in which can be found information about the growth of Christianity in the district; changes during the Reformation and finally the development of the Catholic Mission in the Cabrach. Unexpectedly, the book has a preface by Hilaire Belloc and throughout there are drawings by Peter Anson of places mentioned in the text.

Fr. Shaw built a new school and a 'more dignified' entrance to the church. In 1925, St Mary's celebrated its 100th Anniversary and to celebrate this, the chancel was enlarged and a new altar and oak reredos installed. A feature which has now disappeared was the roof-paintings of angels playing different musical instruments, one playing the bagpipes. The painting 'Our Lady of the Assumption' was gifted to the church by Mrs Lumsden of Clova.

After 1930 came Frs. James Anton, 1930-43, John Matheson, 1943-47, James Marr, 1947-48, William Watson, 1948-51, Douglas Stuart, 1951-55, George Philips, 1955-80, and Charles Stanley, 1980-86. As in all country areas, the Catholic population steadily declined though the churches retained resident priests in Aberlour until 1960 and in Dufftown until 1986. Both churches are active Mass centres with groups of committed parishioners intent on keeping alive their Catholic communities and their churches open and in good order.

When the restoration work which is now being undertaken at St Mary's is completed, how fitting it would be if the Shenval key, at present on display at Blairs Museum, could find a permanent home at St Mary's, which can be said to be the daughter of the Cabrach Mission, becoming in turn the mother church to Aberlour. In the May edition 2012 of the Scalan Newsletter there will be an article about Shenval and the Cabrach Mission, references will be made to two priests, John Geddes and Andrew Dason, who were moved from Shenval to

Scalan and Alexander Farquharson who was moved in the other direction. What did this move entail?

Today we would drive from near Shenval to Dufftown, through Glen Rinnes, branch off on to the Tomintoul road, leave it at the Pole Inn, and drive through the Braes, possibly not even walking the last lap from Eskemulloch to 'remote' Scalan. We find it hard to realise what Scalan's remoteness really meant in the 1700s. There were no roads suitable for horse and carriage in the entire north of Scotland; all journeys were undertaken either on foot over well-trodden tracks or on horseback. These tracks and bridle paths took the most direct route, often over high mountain passes and it is these tracks which had to be used by everyone. As there were reputed to be over 200 whisky stills in Glenlivet in the 1700s, and much of this whisky had to reach markets in the Lowlands, there can be no doubt that all these tracks were very well used.

Scalan used four main tracks. One track lead north-east, crossed the Livet, up Glen Suie to the Black Water and the track passed close to Shenval; this was the vital and relatively close link between Scalan and Shenval either on foot or on horseback; the track gave access to the Deveron valley and to Strathbogie. The next track crossed the Ladder Hills, branching in two once over the summit of the hill, one track going south down Glen Nochty into Strathdon and the other south-east through Glenbuchat and east towards Aberdeen. The third track went south from Scalan over the hill to the Conglass Water, west to Strathavon, Abernethy and Speyside. The fourth track went north through the Braes to Lower Glenlivet, joining a bridle path which passed through Glen Rinnes, leading north to Keith and the Enzie.

1754 saw the completion of the military road from Braemar to Grantown, through Corgarff, the Lecht and Tomintoul. Military Roads were constructed by Government soldiers after the two Jacobite Risings for the swift movement of troops into the Highlands, to quell any further insurrections. The military road through the Lecht was important to Scalan as it gave fairly easy access to a good carriage road only two miles away. Scalan used this route for most journeys to Edinburgh and the South. From Scalan the track went up the side of the Crombie Burn, climbed over the hill Cam Dulack, then down to the Well of Lecht. This road was later extended north-east to Fochabers, north-west close to Inverness, and further south from Braemar to Glenshee, Blairgowrie and Perth.

The Annual Priests' Meetings were held each summer, many of them at Scalan and to meet there, priests had to walk or ride great distances. In a letter from the soonto-be-shifted Alexander Farquharson at Scalan to Bishop Geddes in Edinburgh in June 1786, Farquharson regretted that he would not be able to go on horseback to meet Geddes at Braemar 'on account of the great fatigue they [the horses] have suffered this year carrying home slate, stones, timber, etc.' but he was going to walk to Braemar to meet him and together they would walk back to Scalan. In 1789 Bishop Geddes was at the Annual Meeting held at Scalan and walked to Aberdeen by way of Shenval, where he wished to visit his old congregation, and through the Enzie. His best known walk was his three-week marathon from Edinburgh to the Orkney Isles in 1790, returning via Scalan.

In 1793 Bishop Hay left Scalan, where he had been in charge since the removal of Alexander Farquharson, and he exchanged places with Bishop Geddes then very ill in Edinburgh. Re

came north hoping for an improvement in his health but later that same year his condition deteriorated so quickly that it was essential to leave Scalan before the onset of winter. Despite the fact that the bridle track from Tomintoul, through Tomnavoulin and Glen Rinnes had been made into a good road, Bishop Geddes' journey to Aberdeen in October gives a good indication of the quality of the roads. A chaise from Rundy came as far as Tombreakachie, eight miles from Scalan and could go no further. To meet it there, Bishop Geddes was transported by horse and farm cart and with two overnight stops for the sake of the Bishop; the journey to Aberdeen took three days. As Mgr. Sandy MacWilliam once remarked about the priests of the 1700s: 'They were giants in those days!' They were indeed.

Office Bearers of the Scalan Association

President: Fr. James Thomson, St. Joseph's, 73 Cardowan Road, Stepps, Glasgow, G33 6AA.
Treasurer: Fr. Michael Briody, St. Michael's, 133 Glenmanor Avenue, Moodiesbum, G69 ODL. Tel: 01236 872537. *Correspondence regarding the Association should be sent here ..*

Minutes Secretary: Ann Dean, Caimdale, Provost Street, Huntly, AB54 8BB.

Editorial Team: Mrs. Sylvia Toovey, Ann Dean.

Correspondence regarding the Newsletter can be sent to:

Sylvia Toovey, Chapel House, Chapeltown of Glenlivet Ballindalloch AB37 9JS;

email: johnsy1vie-braes@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 01807590295

A Braes Visitor

Twas up among the Banffshire braes,
An' back amang the bygane days,
When ruthless gaugers roamed the hill, Customs officer
An' rooted out the whisky stills,
An' took the bread frae mony a mou',
AS garred folk pay for getting fou',
An' liquor frae a distance tak, Which they at hame sae weel could mak';
When it grew harder there to bide

Without the drap " the coo" supplied,
An' some their native haunts forsook,
For livelihood elsewhere to look;
Twas then, of his best trade bereft,
His hill-foot farm a tenant left,
An' scarce anither could be got
Who on that farm would cast his lot.
At length, frae laicher doon the shire,
A man, wha wanted to be higher,
Cam' up the vacant faml to see,
An' maybe for't an offer be
A native wag took him in hand
To show the boundaries O' the land;
A man wha liket weel a joke,
An slyly aft in figure spoke.
The farm the stranger steppet owre,
An roun' about him keen did glower,
An' a' the points, baith good an' ill,
His e'e took in wi' practised skill.
An' then says he, "the place, I find,
Is nae ill-suited to the mind;
The soil is good to be sae high,
An' fairly to the sun does lie,
An' on that pasture on the moor
Baith sheep an' stirks wad thrive, I'rr sure;
But I maun say I think it odd
That there is nae road ava'

On which to cart the corn awa'.

By Robert Lamb