

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 Rev. John Geddes to his students in the 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.

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Office Bearers of the Scalan Association:

President: Fr. James Thomson, St. Mary's, 70 Bannatyne Street, Lanark, ML11 7JS.

Secretary/Treasurer: Fr. Michael Briody, St. Michael's, 133 Glenmanor Avenue, Moodiesburn, G69 0DL. **Tel:** 01236 872537.

Correspondence for the Association should be sent to the above address.

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

Editorial Team: Mrs. Sylvia Toovey, Ann Dean, Fr. Michael Briody.

Correspondence regarding the newsletter should be sent to: Mrs. Sylvia Toovey, Chapel House, Chapeltown of Glenlivet, Ballindalloch AB37 9JS.

e-mail: johnsylvia-braes@hotmail.co.uk; **tel:** 01807 590295.

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Three Hundredth Anniversary of the Foundation of Scalan

According to the best research, Scalan was brought to birth on 10 October 1716.

Our main commemoration, naturally, is the **Annual Pilgrimage Mass** which will take place on Sunday 3 July at 4.00pm. The Most Reverend Leo Cushley, Archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh, Metropolitan of the Eastern Province, has agreed to preach on this occasion. Please come, bring some friends with you, and encourage others to come too.

There are a number of initiatives taking shape to commemorate this important anniversary. **A major contribution** is coming from the pen of Dr. John Watts, author of

“Scalan: The Forbidden College, 1716-1799”. He is producing a new work, commissioned by the Scalan Association. It has the working title of **“Scalan: Leaves from the Master’s Day Book”**.

In the study of history, it is said, the essential thing to capture is the mood or atmosphere of any particular period, but it is also the most difficult thing to achieve. Dr. Watts has, through the medium of a diary, built up a picture of daily life at Scalan, at its most perilous period (1741-56) which included the failed Jacobite Uprising of 1745 and its aftermath for the Highlands in general, and Catholics in particular. He has done this by a work of fiction: there is no Master’s Day Book; it does not exist, but, the events, personages, attitudes and details to which he refers are well-attested in the correspondence and other documents of the time. No one is more familiar with this territory than Dr. Watts, as his previous work demonstrates.

In an early conversation, Dr. Watts said he wanted the diary to be an “open door into Scalan” so that we might all enter and taste something of the reality of life for those who lived there. In this he has succeeded beyond measure. No one will read this book without it leaving a lasting feel for how daily life unfolded for those who made up the “fermtoun” of Scalan: the priest, Rev. William Duthie; the students, never more than five, at one point none at all, and for a long time only one; the servant-girl for the kitchen and the young worker for the farm; the neighbours who were loyal, protective and discreet. The diary reveals details of study and timetable; the weather and the landscape; the food and accommodation; cattle thieves, whisky smugglers, the red-coats and visiting bishops; disillusionment and low spirits but always Faith in the cause to which they were committed and for which they were prepared to suffer so much. **The book should be ready in time for the Annual Mass on Sunday 3 July.**

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Other ways to mark the anniversary are at various stages of completion:

- an altar at Carfin Grotto, the National Shrine, commemorating the anniversary and representing the sufferings of Scots Catholics in the Penal Times.
- a plaque within The Scalan to honour the three priests who founded the Association, for priests, in 1946, and Bill and Jane McEwan, who worked devotedly for Scalan when the Association was opened to wider membership in 1988.
- A competition for schools in the Diocese of Aberdeen.
- a new leaflet to place in our churches and tourist outlets.
- The Blairs Museum has almost completed an exhibition some of which will be on display at the Annual Mass. The manager, Mr Ian Forbes, promises to bring Bishop Hay’s chalice and Scalan’s “wooden” candlesticks which featured in the

last *Scalan News*.

- A Scalan enthusiast wants to produce a DVD. She has been in touch and has received advice and support from the trustees, and has worked hard and long on the subject, but was disappointed not to receive a grant from a local body, so that the project is left hanging for the moment. Other items in the wings are a new website and a new constitution. Co-incidental to the anniversary, an arts group in conjunction with the National Theatre of Scotland wishes to use Scalan as a backdrop for a production. The trustees are in negotiation with them. One thing the trustees are determined to safeguard is the serious story of Scalan and not allow it to be trivialised. This should rule out any more ghost stories in the press, hopefully! Many of you are probably aware that a tabloid paper printed a photo purporting to show a monk-like figure at a window of 'The Scalan. There were no monks at Scalan and, even if there were, they would hardly be wearing religious habits in Penal Times!

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Subscriptions

According to our most up-to-date records, 277 people have paid subscriptions in the last two or three years. However only 148 had paid by the time the *Scalan News* went out at Christmastime. That reminded only a further 17 members to pay, even though it contained a heartfelt appeal to do so.

All subscriptions are now due, except for three members who have already paid ahead. They will be able to tell this by "SCALAN 2017" or "SCALAN 2020" on their address label. If you are fully paid up until now but your subscription is now due, your address label will say "SCALAN 2016". If your address label simply says "SCALAN", then you are in arrears. However, we are not chasing you for these. What we would like you to do is pay your subscription for the coming year and pay a further donation if you are able, as all members are encouraged to do each year. The policy of the Scalan Association has been, for several years now, to peg the subscription at £10 while asking those who want to give more to do so.

In this 300th anniversary year we hope you will not only stay with us, but you will encourage others to join.

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The Scalan Kitchen

Set to hunt through the books on Scalan looking for storyboard items, it became ob-

vious that the accounts had all been written by historians and not by someone with hands-on experience in domestic matters. There are many details of what was grown on the farm and what was bought in from outside, not to mention items delivered from Aberdeen. What did the housekeeper make with it all? She would have had her hands full with a house full of growing lads, the tutors and the visitors who came for meetings and to recover their strength. There is no doubt that she would have been busy.

It is on record that oats played a major part in the diet: porridge, oatcakes, sowens (a gruel made from the soaked sides of the oats) but there would also have been brose (kail and neep – both grown on the farm) along with skirlie (onions and oatmeal fried in fat), skirlie pudding and oatmeal soup. Montrose's men had lived on brose on their marches and youngsters growing up in the more economical days some sixty and seventy years ago were quite accustomed to being set down to a bowl of brose before a main dish to take the edge off their appetite.

Oatmeal would also have been used in haggis and pan haggis – a simpler version with liver, onions, oatmeal and suet, all boiled in a pot. The bere that made the bannocks would have been used to brew the light ale which was drunk with meals in the eighteenth century and malt was brought in to work with it. The bere, or barley was also used in soups, a staple of Scots broth with a bit of meat or some bones from the mutton and vegetables grown in the area round the house.

And what vegetables! Onions, carrots, neeps, cabbage white and red, leeks, potatoes and pot herbs to add flavour. Not just for Scots broth, but also in summer when everything was in season there would have been a hotch potch so full of fresh vitamins that the boys would have been well-equipped for anything. Doubtless, there being livestock on the farm, sheep's head broth would have featured too, with the meat removed and turned into a ragout or a form of brawn to go with the oat-cakes.

The mutton would have been cooked mostly by braising or simmering gently in water yielding stock for the soup or a gravy. Tender cuts might have been brandered over the fire like a modern barbecue and big gigots could be cured with sugar, salt petre and salt, then smoked or dried becoming mutton hams. On boiling those, the stock might well become pease soup or porridge. The same methods would have been used for other meats, giving salt beef, bacon and ham as is sold today. Again, every part would have been used and nothing wasted. It does lead one to wonder what the situation was with the goats, because Scalan was known for its goats' milk cure for exhausted ecclesiastics but there seem to be no mention of them. Perhaps they were kept by the neighbours. At the same time it is worth noting that most of the pork

production in Aberdeenshire at the time was salted and supplied to the Navy.

Now to fish. Isolated in the depths of the hills, the fish was supplied dried or salted. White fish could be air dried, and was so delicate that in parts of Aberdeenshire it was used as bread in times of grain shortages. A very little dressing was required to prepare it, but salt fish had to be soaked for a considerable time to make it palatable. Tatties and herring, with the herring cooked on top of the tatties in a pot over the fire were popular. Their upmarket cousins in Sweden make the highly relished Jansen's Temptation with the addition of cream, but soaked it could be used in salads, again like the modern Scandinavian versions whilst salt cod would have made hairy tatties. Salmon was bought in for special occasions but was unlikely to have featured regularly on the boys' menu.

What else was bought in? Meagre supplies of tea and coffee are shown in the lists; saltpetre and vinegar – for curing and pickling supplies for winter. Did the modern magic food of pickled cabbage appear frequently in winter? Perhaps there was a version like sauerkraut which would have gone with the cooked preserved meats. An amount of sugar appears but baking by modern methods would not have featured, so the purchase of eggs would not have been used in elaborate cakes – eggs were small by modern standards. Gooseberries appeared in the garden; they could have been preserved for sweets and sauces and did the boys wander into the hills for berries? Blaeberrries, cloudberrries and cranberries could have been turned into jam by the thrifty housekeeper, though experience leads the writer to believe that most would have been eaten on the spot. Were there wild raspberries too? What jam did get made would have gone well with the oatcakes and bannocks.

All in all the boys would have had at least as good a diet in Scalan as they would have had at home. In many ways better as the vegetables would have been plentiful and fresh from the garden so fresh that a hungry lad might have sneaked a slice of raw turnip as farm children do, and boys being boys there was probably never a problem with leftovers.

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Charles A Francis, a faithful, regular Scalan Member from Dagenham, Essex (we have 16 members living in England) has died since the last *Scalan News*. At his funeral, mourners were directed towards giving donations to the Scalan Association and we received a total of £230. This amount came in cheques from three private individuals, who took the trouble to post these to our treasurer. He also received a phone call from Mr. Francis' sister and was able to express both the sympathies and the thanks of the Association.

Scalan Names

The McLachlan Family

If you visit the Braes of Glenlivet, Chapeltown and wander round the old and new graveyard where the majority of those born here are interred you will see a large stone cross in the centre of the old graveyard. You will have found the McLachlan tombstone. Also inside the chapel are five brass plaques below some of the Stations of the Cross engraved with the McLachlan family name.

John McLachlan and Helen Grant lived at Timberford which no longer exists being absorbed into Belachnockan between 1814 and 1841. Both properties lie near the Alt-Na-Fanich burn and close to the “Timmer Road” which carried the timber from Abernethy forest by Suie to Keith and Huntly. Part of it was also called the Funeral road linking Lettoch and the Braes with Kirkmichael.

To return to John and Helen; they had four sons, two of which, John and Paul, became priests. Helen died in 1814 and John married again to Barbara Stuart who became step mother to the boys and mother to six children.

Rev. John McLachlan

He was born in 1804 and died in 1856, aged 53 years. John entered Aquhorties in 1820, and then travelled to the Royal Scots College, Valladolid, in Spain to complete his preparation for the Priesthood, and was ordained in 1829. He took some boys to Ratisbon and stayed a year. John was also at Preshome, Huntly, Keith and Inverness. Whilst there he served the garrison at Fort George and also decorated St. Mary's Church “with a chasteness and elegance of taste which there are as yet few examples in this country”.

John left Inverness and travelled to Glengarry, Northern Canada. A number of Catholics left Scotland in the early 1850s possibly because of the unrest created by the ‘clearances’. While there he was drawn into the educational politics of the area by Bishop P. Phelan. In April 1853 a bill was passed which made provision for denominational colleges to affiliate as teaching units which was strongly opposed by Donald Alexander McDonald, a wealthy business man, politician and Reeve of Kenyon Township, Glengarry. He was of Scottish descent. A large number of settlers were quite happy to live without separate schools. Fr. John McLachlan was sent to Glengarry by the Bishop and preached against McDonald from the pulpit. He denounced McDonald as “a petty miller, a devils agent and he'd sprung from nothing like a

mushroom on a dung hill” He was charged with defamation of character but was cleared. John did not return to Scotland and died in 1856 aged 53.

Rev. Paul McLachlan

Born in 1805 in Timberford, he was three years younger than his brother John. He entered Aquhorties in 1819, and then travelled to Paris in 1822. He was ordained in 1831.

Paul was the first priest to visit Fife, only eight Catholics being recorded there after the reformation but during the 19th century there was an influx of Irish workers from Donegal who found work in the mines and on construction sites. These workers were joined by Highland Scots. Paul, a Highlander, was given charge of the whole county in 1831. He had no permanent home or assistant. By 1838 he had a church built in Stirling which became the base of his mission to Falkirk. The construction of the Glasgow to Edinburgh railway in the late 1830s employed thousands of labourers, many being Irish Catholics.

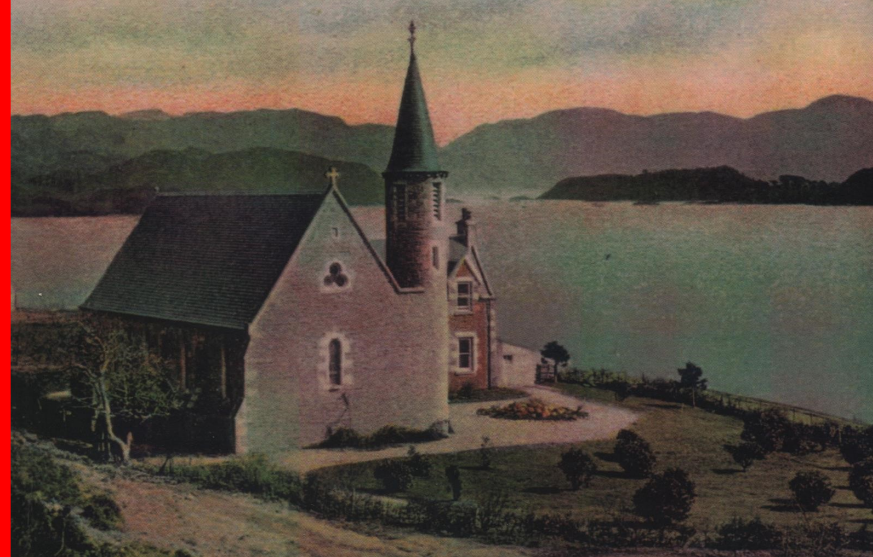
Paul needed a permanent place of worship to establish a good steady congregation. The first place was the Railway Hotel area in 1838. By 1839 a regular Sunday Mass was held in “The Pleasance – also known as Rankine’s Folly”; a great success. The railway company gave him a large sum of money and with other help he purchased a site from Aitkin, the brewers, in September 1841. William Stirling, a Dunblane architect, was appointed and on the 28th May 1843 the church was up and running. It could seat about five or six hundred worshippers. St. Francis Xavier was the name chosen for the new church.

Paul and his parishioners needed determination and courage to overcome the difficulties to come. He needed an assistant; the industrial revolution was at its peak and the number of immigrants increasing. After thirteen years Fr. Robert C Cameron, a newly ordained priest, came to Falkirk. He died within months of being appointed. Cholera and typhoid were rife within the hovels of Silver Row and other areas where the poor Catholics lived. The young priest was not replaced and Father Paul worked on alone surviving cholera twice, rheumatic fever, and apoplexy. What a marvellous man! Bishop James Gillis, Vicar Apostolic of the eastern division, came from Edinburgh to confirm 47 children. The number of children was steadily growing. Good Catholic schools were desperately needed. Fr Paul with the help of his flock built a school in Manor Street in 1852, staffed it and ran it. St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, in the old town, on its closure in 1955 was used as the Young Men’s Hall and respite chapel until 1961.

Chapels of the Rough Bounds:

Morar, Knoydart, Arisaig, Moidart

Alasdair Roberts



Alasdair Roberts, Founder-Editor of the “Scalan News”, has gone into print with the above publication - *Chapels of the Rough Bounds: Morar, Knoydart, Arisaig, Moidart*. The front cover shows the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and St. Cumin beside Loch Morar, with Eilean Bàn in the left background where the forerunner of Scalan was founded in 1714.

The book can be purchased from the Mallaig Heritage Centre, Station Road, Mallaig, Inverness-shire, PH41 4PY. Copies cost £7.50 (plus £1.50 for p&p) For postage costs for orders of more than one copy contact The Mallaig Heritage Centre on 01687 462085, or e-mail curator@mallaighheritage.org.uk

A review of the book, written by Monsignor John McIntyre, former president of the Scalan Association, can be read on page 17.





The grave of Priest Gordon in the Snow Kirkyard, Old Aberdeen.
The Latin inscription says, in part:

“Carolus Gordon Presbyter” (Charles Gordon Priest)



A statue of Priest Gordon

(cf. article, page 13)

Father Paul McLachlan chose to work for the Church in fresh fields. Monsignor Paul died in 1883 aged 79 at Doune near Stirling in his fifty second year of his priesthood.

The Gordon Brothers, John and Charles.

From 1785 the Aberdeen Mission settled down to the rule of the Gordon brothers. John was born in 1760 and Charles in 1772; parents unknown. Birthplace was Land-send in the Enzie. They were nephews of Bishop John Geddes and cousins of John Gordon, the rector at Valladolid.

John entered Scalan in 1771 leaving in 1774 to further his education at the Royal Scots College, Valladolid, Spain, completing his course and returned to Scotland. He was ordained in Edinburgh by Bishop John Geddes in December 1784. He spent some time in the presbytery helping his uncle. He became the first Procurator at Aquhorties 1799-1807 and Factor at Blairs from 1808 until his death in 1823.

Charles, the younger by twelve years spent a year at Scalan leaving to further his education at Douai. He was driven out by the French Revolution and completed his studies at Aberdeen where he was ordained in 1795. He immediately joined his brother and stayed in Aberdeen until his death in 1855.

He was known as "Priest Gordon" by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, always out and about. A little man of pleasant ruddy countenance with a slight stoop; he was regularly seen in the east end, down its lanes and entering the foetid closes on errands of mercy. The inhabitants knew of the orphanages he had built; they saw him dispensing soup in the soup kitchens of Loch Street; his heart was as big as his "house"; there was always room for one more. He was well known, loved and respected by all. He worked for the poor and needy of Aberdeen until his dying day.

Tributes were paid to this little man, small in stature but big of heart. Monsignor MacWilliam wrote that the crowning act of Charles's life was the school. He took on the challenge of education after the death of James Barclay, one of his congregation, who taught Catholic children in a small school in Longacre on the ancient lands of the Greyfriars monastery. It served as an orphanage in one section and as a school in another; funded by donations of friends and parishioners. The priest lived at the school and with his driving spirit and confidence, success was ensured. Bishop Kyle persuaded Father Charles to retire in 1854. He died in 1855 aged 84 years. He was mourned by many. He was buried in the Snow Kirkyard in Old Aberdeen with his brother John and his uncle who passed away sixty years before.

The Grants of Blairfindy

The Grants were custodians of the lands upon which Blairfindy castle was built about 1470. They were descended from William Grant circa 1527 who was the son of John Grant, the second son of Sir Duncan Grant, Laird of Freuchie in 1442. Blairfindy Castle is situated in Glenlivet; very remote then but not now. The land belonged to the Earls of Huntly, a Gordon who built the castle in the late 16th century when they found the Wolf of Badenoch's Drumin Castle too uncomfortable. It is an L-shaped layout with a very narrow turret staircase to a parapet with an opening for dropping stones or burning objects on attackers. On the doorway there is a panel carrying the Gordon arms dated 1586. The castle is currently in the Tomintoul and Glenlivet trust's plans to safeguard what remains.

Traditionally the sons, Peter and Robert, descended from Sir William were Catholic. They were educated at Scalan and supported the Jacobite cause in the 1745 rebellion. Colonel David Grant was Prince Charles's closest adviser and was his map maker in the campaign. The Hanoverian troops burnt the fortified house down and Blairfindy was abandoned.

Peter Grant

Born in 1708, he spent a year at Scalan 1724-1725, and then travelled to Rome to finish his studies. He was ordained in 1735, returning to Scotland where he took up a post in Glengarry. After two years he returned to the Vatican, replacing the Scots Agent who had been murdered. One of the agent's jobs was to welcome new students and give help when required. Unfortunately he was lax with discipline which led to unacceptable behaviour and a failure to study. For a long time anyone of distinction who visited Rome was provided with letters of introduction to Abbé Peter. One visitor was James Grant, Baronet, who he helped to buy paintings for Castle Grant in Grantown. Bishop Hay travelled to Rome in 1781 to see how bad things were and to try and sort out the many problems. Abbé Peter Grant died in Rome in 1784 aged 76 years.

Robert Grant

Robert was born in 1720 and like his brother, Peter, had his early education at Scalan before transferring to the Scots College Paris and then Rome. He served five stations in Rome from 1749 to 1764. In 1765 he was appointed Rector of the Scots College Douai where he died in 1784 aged 64 years.

Bishop John Matheson

A reminder; Sandy (Alexander) Matheson was born at the Scalan Cottage close to the Seminary. He died in 2005; the last Matheson to live there. Sandy's mother Lily and the bishop's father, John, were brother and sister. John married Jane Smith and they lived in Tomintoul with their six children. Son John was born in April 1901, went to the Pontifical Scots College, Rome, and was ordained on the 7th March 1925. He served St. Mary's, Dufftown for a number of years before being appointed the Bishop of the Diocese of Aberdeen on the 22nd August 1947. He died in office on the 5th July 1950 aged 49. His grave is in the churchyard of St. Michael's Tomintoul.

Points of Interest

1. Scalan and Sandy's cottage survived the winter with no structural damage. The heavy rains caused water to accumulate round the buildings and the Crombie to rise and burst its banks. A visit to Scalan was impossible without wellingtons and determination hence no donations in the box. Due to the inability of some visitors to shut the door an automatic closer has been fitted to prevent rain and leaves blowing in. I hope a better spring and summer bring in more visitors.
2. The regular visitors, the birds, are starting to arrive. A pair of oyster catchers are calling in the Scalan fields competing with the lapwings and the curlews. It is too early for the swallows; the spring has not arrived yet. The wild flowers have the light and the wet but not the sun to warm the land.
3. Come to the A.G.M. on Tuesday 31 May when we should have some news on the H. L. F. Bid to preserve the two barns. Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments are now one organisation. Two gentlemen are coming to stay locally to photograph and record the remarkable graffiti in the barns. They have the lights, equipment and know-how to record this history of the people who lived and worked the land in the immediate area.

There will be lunch available before the A.G.M. at £11.00. PLEASE contact me at 01807590295 or johnsylvia-braes @hotmail.co.uk at least two days before.

The Scalan Accounts, 1750 – 1794.

The Scalan Account Books give details of every conceivable expense of the house, food and drink, heating and lighting, boys' clothes and shoes, animals and crops and all improvements to the buildings and land. From this yearly detail it becomes quite clear that at no time during this period was Scalan 'self-sufficient', or trying to be.

What does become clear however, is the obvious interest in and enthusiasm at Scalan for the new agricultural methods as practised by Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, Aberdeenshire, earlier in the century and also by the 6th Earl of Findlater on his Banffshire estates. Basically this meant enclosing fields with stone dykes, the rotation of crops, summer fallow with rye grass and white clover seed and the making of hay, improvement of stock which could be kept and fed over winter with the introduction of the growing of turnips, and draining and ditching. Tracing the wages given to men and boys, it can be seen what 'improvement' activities were going on during these years, ploughing, delving, trenching new ground, manuring, ditching, dykeing and mowing.

To the accounts:-for a few years in the 1750s milk appears, which would suggest possibly only one or two milking cows, but by 1754 two cows are going to the bull, and this type of entry then appears regularly, suggesting that there were at least three milking cows, with their calves. There are no more entries about milk, but butter and cheese appear regularly throughout the accounts. Butter in small quantities may have been made when there was spare milk as a butter churn appears in the accounts. One would expect the keeping of hens for their eggs but as large quantities of eggs appear so regularly in the accounts, it seems to suggest that hens were mainly for eating. As the land was enclosed at Scalan, enriched by the use of dung, more cattle were bought in, fattened and killed for the house. There are very few entries about pigs, (swine) but they do appear, again for pork. Sheep do not appear often in the 1750s and 1760s apart from 'wedders' bought to fatten and kill now and then. Sheep there must have been for their wool but this had to be supplemented with bought-in wool. As the accounts go into the 1770s and beyond it is clear that a flock of sheep is being built up, breeding ewes and 'wedders' and old sheep for eating and in consequence there are a few entries for the selling of excess wool. Raw hides were bought in for the making of shoes.

Oats was of course the main crop grown, but this must have just added a little to the yearly bargain of 40 bolls of meal from Gordon of Aberlour (one boll of meal = 140 lbs or 63.5 kg.). In a bad year meal also came from Leslie of Fetternear. Beare and pease were also grown, but had to be supplemented from elsewhere, with frequent mention of corn and straw purchases. The oats were thrashed and winnowed at Scalan and then taken to the mill at Refriesh, the only mill in the district. In the accounts there is mention of Scalan's share in helping to carry home the new mill-stone to Refriesh. Grass and clover seed, onion and turnip seed, kail seed and seed potatoes are annually bought, but also cabbage and kail plants in large quantities (once to be repurchased as the frost got the first lot). Growing onions couldn't have been very successful as they were regularly purchased for the kitchen.

From the accounts one can almost picture the lay-out of Scalan at that time – completely different to the solitary ‘college’ building with the 19th century mills down by the Crombie Burn which we see today. In the second half of the 1700s, Scalan itself with its chapel and kitchen wings was surrounded by innumerable smaller buildings, the byres and milk house, the steadings (for at least three horses), the pig house and many hen houses too and implement sheds and cart shed, peat stacks, sheep cotes and lamb house and probably many more.

In the accounts of the 1790s the names of specific ‘fields’ are recorded: ‘Croft Mary’ sown, ‘northwest croft of hillpark’ sown, ‘little yard’ for cabbage plants, sowed in the ‘Tomb’(Tom of Scalan) 21 pecks of oats, sowed two pecks large of potatoes in the ‘Bank’, ten pecks of bear in ‘North Park’ Southside of road, nine pecks of bear in ‘north side’ of road, potatoes south side next the burn, as many on the side next the road, six pecks in ‘Farindearg’: in 1781 there were the wages for a man building the Park dyke. Scalan must have been a hive of activity during those years as Bishop Hay and the masters were determined to excel in farming, providing work for many and an example and talking point for the entire district.

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Book Review:

Alasdair Roberts’ *Chapels of the Rough Bounds: Morar, Knoydart, Arisaig, Moidart*

Readers of Scalan News will be glad to see that its former editor Alasdair Roberts has added to his many publications and articles on post-Reformation Scottish Catholic history this little work on the many Catholic chapels to be found, or remembered, in the area of the Western Highlands between Loch Hourn and Loch Shiel, known as the Rough Bounds.

That title, a translation from the Gaelic, indicates the impenetrable nature of this land of mountainous peninsulas– Knoydart, Morar and Arisaig, and Moidart to the south—divided by sea-lochs and, indicates also something of its history.

Its isolated population remained firmly Catholic in the centuries following the Reformation, and when in 1731 Hugh MacDonald of Morar became the first bishop of the Highland Vicariate, five of his twelve mission centres were within the Rough Bounds.

The deliberately narrow focus of this study - concerned only with the places of worship in this area - has great advantages. It allows space for consideration of the location, materials, and changing design of the buildings themselves, and at the same time

casts light on the nature of the worshipping communities who used them, and how they developed from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.

In the century before the 'Glorious Revolution' snuffed out the possibility of some kind of Catholic resurgence under James II, and the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith at last provided missionary bishops for the Catholics of Scotland, chapels on the whole could only be found in the houses of the surviving Catholic gentry. We can say that in the seventeenth century the very few secular priests in the Highlands, and the Gaelic-speaking Irish religious - Jesuit, Franciscan, and later Vincentian and Dominican, who at different times came to their assistance, had roving commissions over wide areas and had to find lodgings and a place to say Mass wherever they could. It is only in the eighteenth century that there are records or archaeological remains of simple thatched buildings intended as permanent places of worship or, in some cases, small seminaries to support priestly recruitment.

As Roberts' investigations move from Morar (where he now lives) north to the series of coastal chapel-sites in Knoydart, then south to Moidart and finally to Glenfinnan, he deals with all the later phases of post-Reformation Scottish Catholicism. There are earlier places like Inverbeg on Loch Morar - its ruins now consolidated like the chapel-wing of Scalan - and those of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, mostly now demolished or in ruins, where living-space for the priest became part of the chapel-plan, though his visits might only be monthly or even less frequent. And there are the fine nineteenth century buildings we can now see produced by the fundraising efforts of an energetic priest like William McIntosh or by benefactors - first Macdonald of Clanranald at Arisaig, and later incoming Catholic landowners like the Lovats, James Hope-Scott, and the Cameron-Heads. There is space in the book to consider somethings outside its main remit - like the ancient ruins of Kilmory in Arisaig, traditional burial places, and the ambiguous pierced cross at Kilchoan; but it is these surviving buildings - some associated with notable architects like James Gillespie-Graham, Edward Welby Pugin, and Reginald Fairlie - which will be of most immediate interest to many readers. (Roberts' assertion, by the way, that Edward Pugin's father, Augustine Welby Pugin, was an influence on Gillespie-Graham must be questioned: Gillespie-Graham had developed his early version of neo-Gothic many years before the youthful Pugin became his friend and collaborator.)

The Chapels of the Rough Bounds is well and relevantly illustrated, and has a beautiful cover-picture of the Church of Our Lady and St. Cumin's in Morar. The reader less familiar with this part of the Highlands could wish for a more detailed map, with many more sites marked and perhaps some date-indications. But the Further Reading section is full and interesting, and the index excellent. Alasdair Roberts and the Mal-

laig Heritage Centre have given us a modest but worthy addition to the literature of Highland religious history.

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