

A New Bishop for the diocese of Aberdeen

Dom Hugh Gilbert OSB, Abbot of Pluscarden, 1992-2011, was ordained Bishop ofAberdeen, in the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, on 15 August, 2011.The Scalan Association assures him of our best prayers that God may guide him always in his work. Bishop Gilbert has already accepted an invitation to preach at the Annual Scalan Mass next year, 2013. We hope that, God willing, we will be graced with his presence often over the years ahead, as his other duties permit.

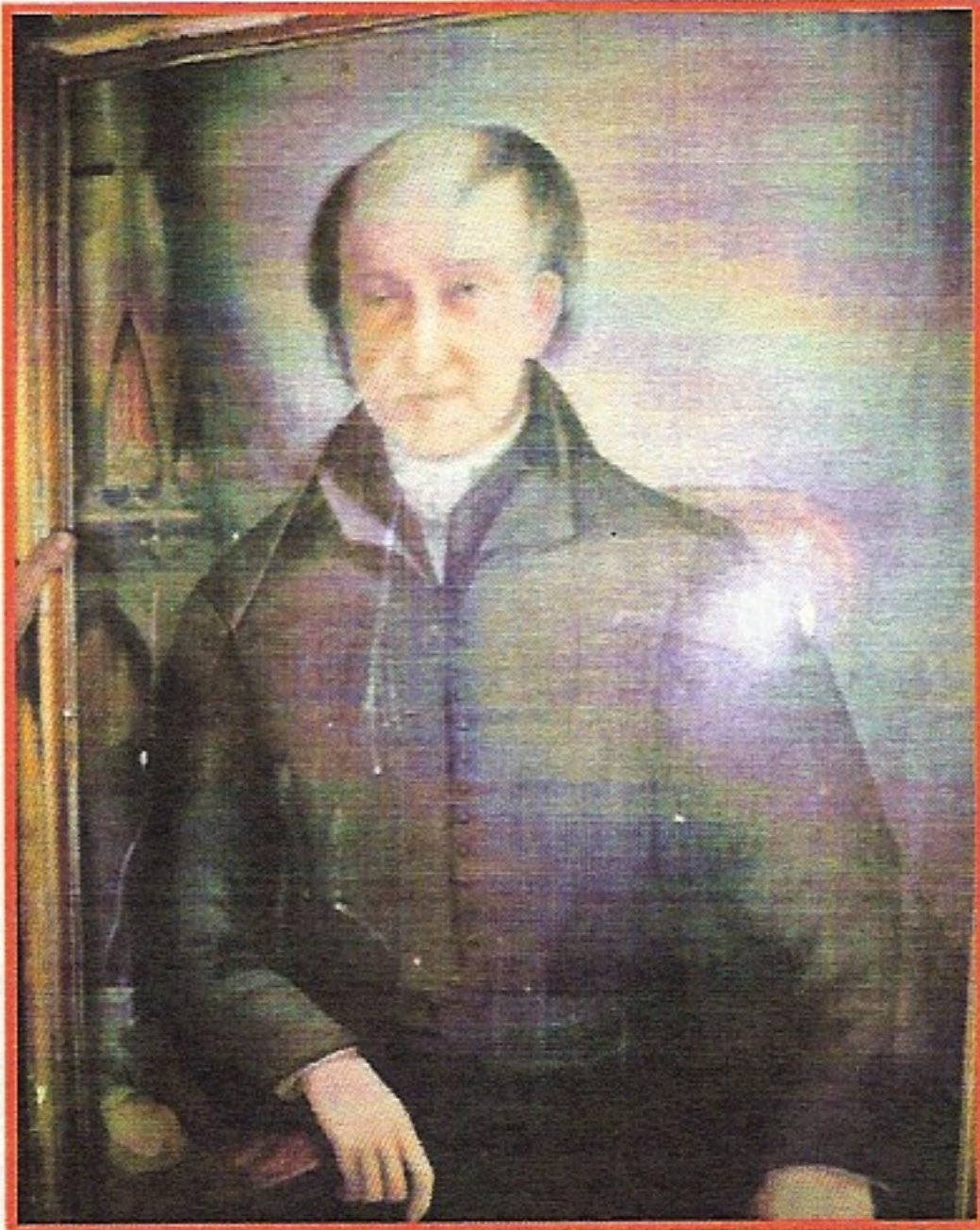
St Mary’s, Dufftown: The story of a church.

James Duff; fourth Earl of Fife founded the village of Dufftown in 1817. This was wonderful news for the Catholics in the area. In order to avoid persecution they had been worshipping in secret and inhospitable locations for generations. Since 1794 they were meeting regularly at Upper Keithock up in the hills near Auchindoun Castle. Parishioners travelled from Mortlach, Aberlour and Cabrach; their journey was difficult, the roads were non-existent and the way was steep. Initially a farmhouse had been converted to provide a chapel on the upper floor. It was very cramped. In 1804 the Rev John Davidson decided to build Chapel Keithock. The Cabrach was becoming depopulated and their numbers had dwindled; by 1809 worshippers had reduced to 127. The Rev George Gordon was sent to the mission in that year. His charge was extensive, covering eight parishes. He continually rued the day that such an expensive building was built in such an inaccessible place. So in 1817 he was delighted with the Earl of Fife’s plans. Looking across from Keithock it was obvious the village was the place to build a chapel. It was situated on lower and more fertile ground and there were good roads in all directions.

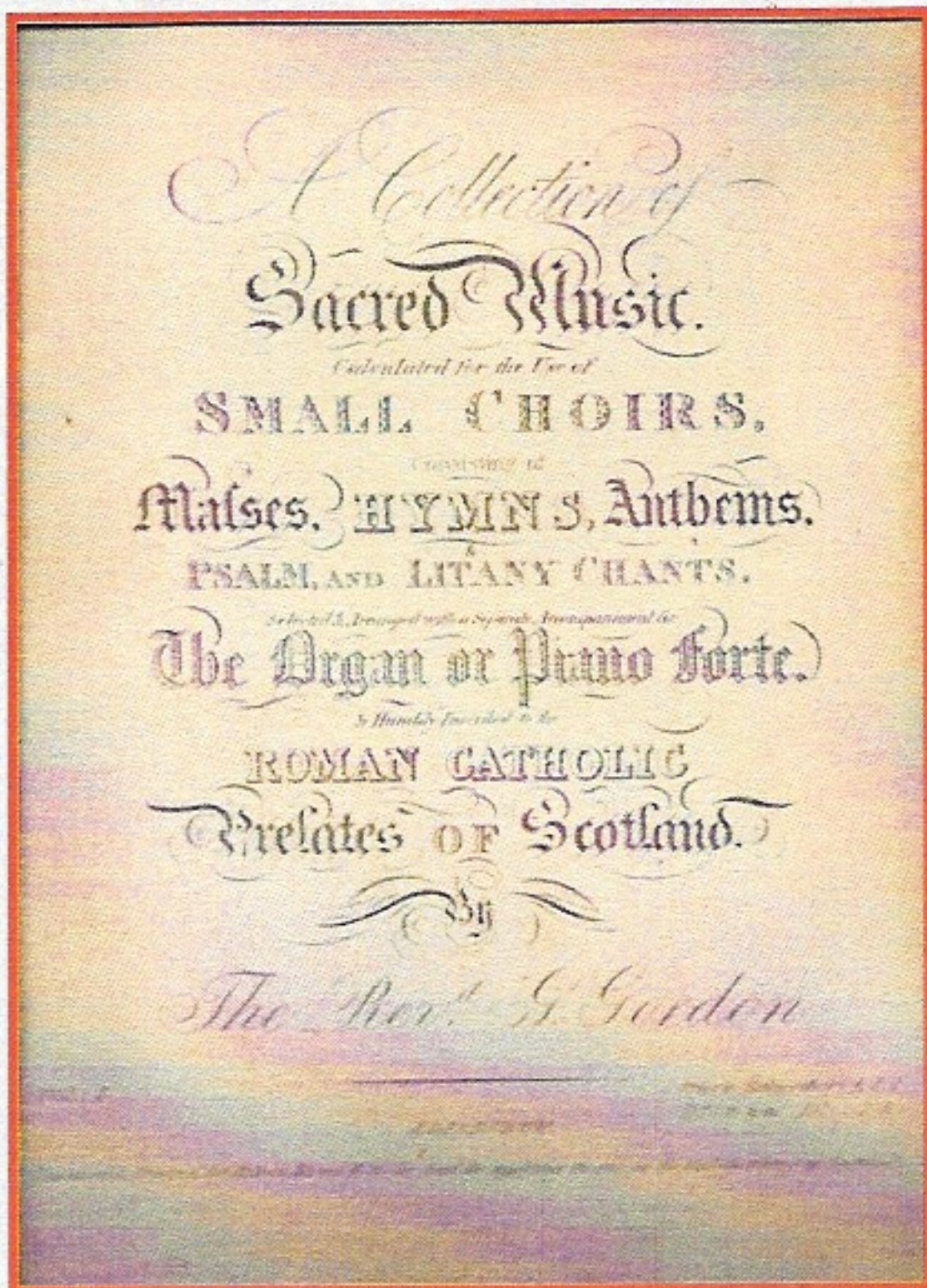
Two feus were taken, though Fr Gordon was at a loss to know how it would be paid for. The Rev james Kyle, Aquhorties, helped draw up the plans. He later went on to work on the Chapel House Preshome with William Robertson, as well as St Margaret’s, Huntly, and the Church of the Incarnation, Tombae. The magnificent “Buckie Cathedral”, St Peter’s, was also his work, in partnership with Alexander and Wlliam Reid and, later, the Belgian architect Charles Jean Menart who helped to draw up the plans for the chapel. His final chapel was the Church of the Immaculate Conception,Inverurie in 1852.

In Dufftown, Fr. Gordon was pushing ahead to get the chapel up and running, Work began in 1824. Less than a year later on June 1, 1825 Fr Gordon was settled in the house and the congregation was able to worship in the chapel. According to the Catholic Directory of 1832 the building was erected “with some degree of elegance, which as yet had scarcely been attempted in the North of Scotland “. It was built in the Gothic style withan ornamented front of polished stone finished with elegant workmanship. The interior sported an “ancient and true roof” being completely vaulted in the ancient tradition with groined arches formed of stucco; in 1833 the only other chapel with such high specifications was to be found in Glasgow Over the next few years the house and chapel were improved. A wall was built round the entire three acre plot. Money was tight. Though they had received some donations from Irish Catholics and from throughout Scotland, more than 50% of money needed for the erection of the building was raised by the Dufftown parishioners: “a considerable amount certainly for one of the smallest congregations in Scotland” This was to be the pattern throughout its history.

The 1833 Directory added that there were around 170 regular attendees. Fr Gordon played an important part in ensuring not only that the chapel was built and improved as time went on. He also played a major role in the revival of Scottish Church music.He edited two volumes of Sacred Music for the use of Small Choirs.. Copies were supplied to parishes all over Scotland, England, 'Ireland and America. Volumes can still befound in St Mary’s today He also provided St Mary’s with an organ.



Rev. George Gordon



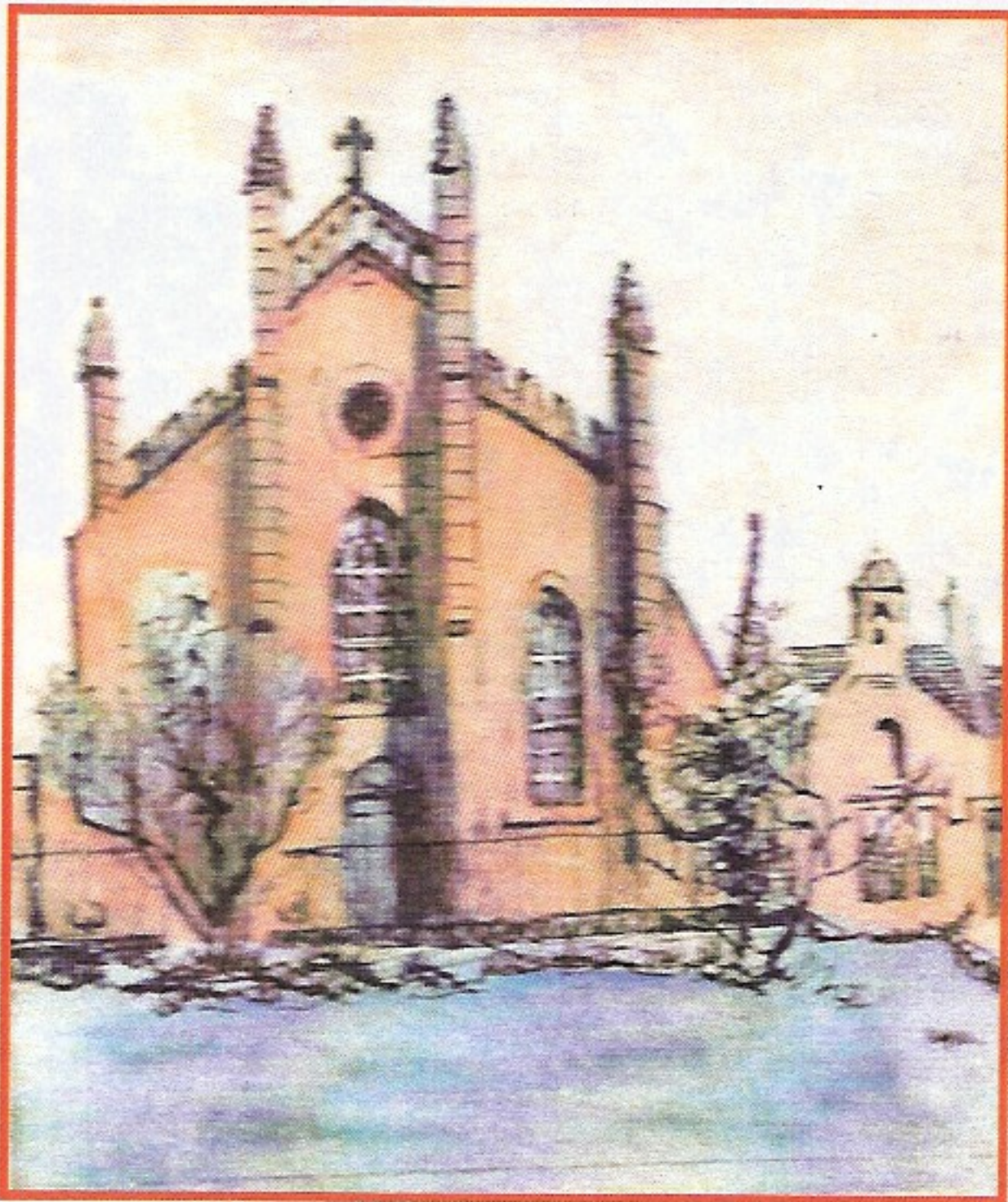
The frontispiece of one of Fr. Gordon's collections of sacred music

When the Fr. Gordon died on 10 May 1856 at the age of 80 he was buried under the floor of the sanctuary to the left of the altar. In 1860 Fr John Kemp was in place as parish priest. He was keen to increase the beauty of the chapel enlarging it and embellishing the decor. Around this time it was rededicated to Our Lady of the Assumption, having formerly been known as St Bean's. Fr Kemp converted part of the chapel house into a school, until in 1863 a purpose built schoolhouse was erected on ground behind the chapel. A certificated mistress was employed to teach the sixty boys and girls who attended. By 1867 she was also running an evening school. Father Kemp had also hoped to introduce a religious community to the town and built a large house next door for this purpose. It was not to be. The parish continued to expand. Fr George Shaw was installed as Parish Priest in 1905. He realised there was a need for a mission station in Aberlour. JWH Grant of Wester Elchies donated land for the building and parishioners were once again actively fund-raising. Architect Archibald MacPherson, designed the building. The work cost £1250 Bishop Aeneas Chisholm opened The Church of the Sacred Heart on 8 July 1909.

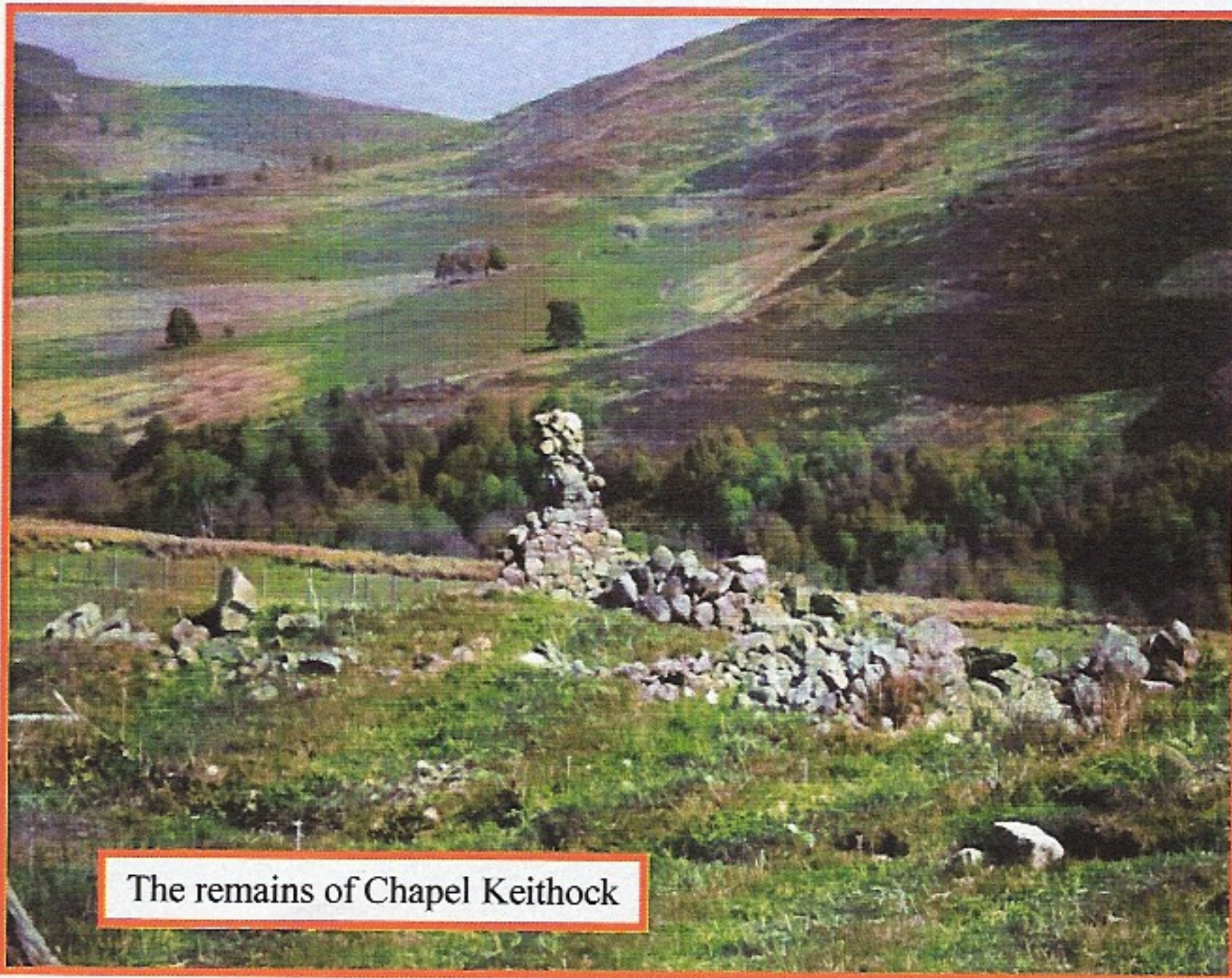
During Fr Shaw's time at Dufftown a new school was built, a new pipe organ installed and a new and more dignified entrance added to the church. The school finally closed, like so many others, in the 1960s.

In 1952 Robert McDonald, a parishioner and former pupil returned to his roots to be ordained at St Mary's. He was parish priest in for 28 years. Monsignor John Copland took over responsibility for the chapels in Dufftown and Aberlour in 1977, along with his own parish St Thomas's in Keith.

Over the years, as for parishes everywhere, numbers have been dwindling and buildings have been crumbling. St Mary's has struggled to keep a roof over the heads of its congregation. In the 21st century its future has been in the balance. Dry rot has ravaged the building. However the congregation did not give up and with the blessing of parish priest Fr Colin Stewart they have been fundraising and garnering support. Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund have recently granted a considerable amount of funding and parishioners continue with their fundraising. For the whole of the history of this parish, money has been short and the congregation has rallied to the cause. It is no different today Parishioners are optimistic about St Mary's future



St. Mary's, Dufftown,
painted by a parishioner
in 1981.



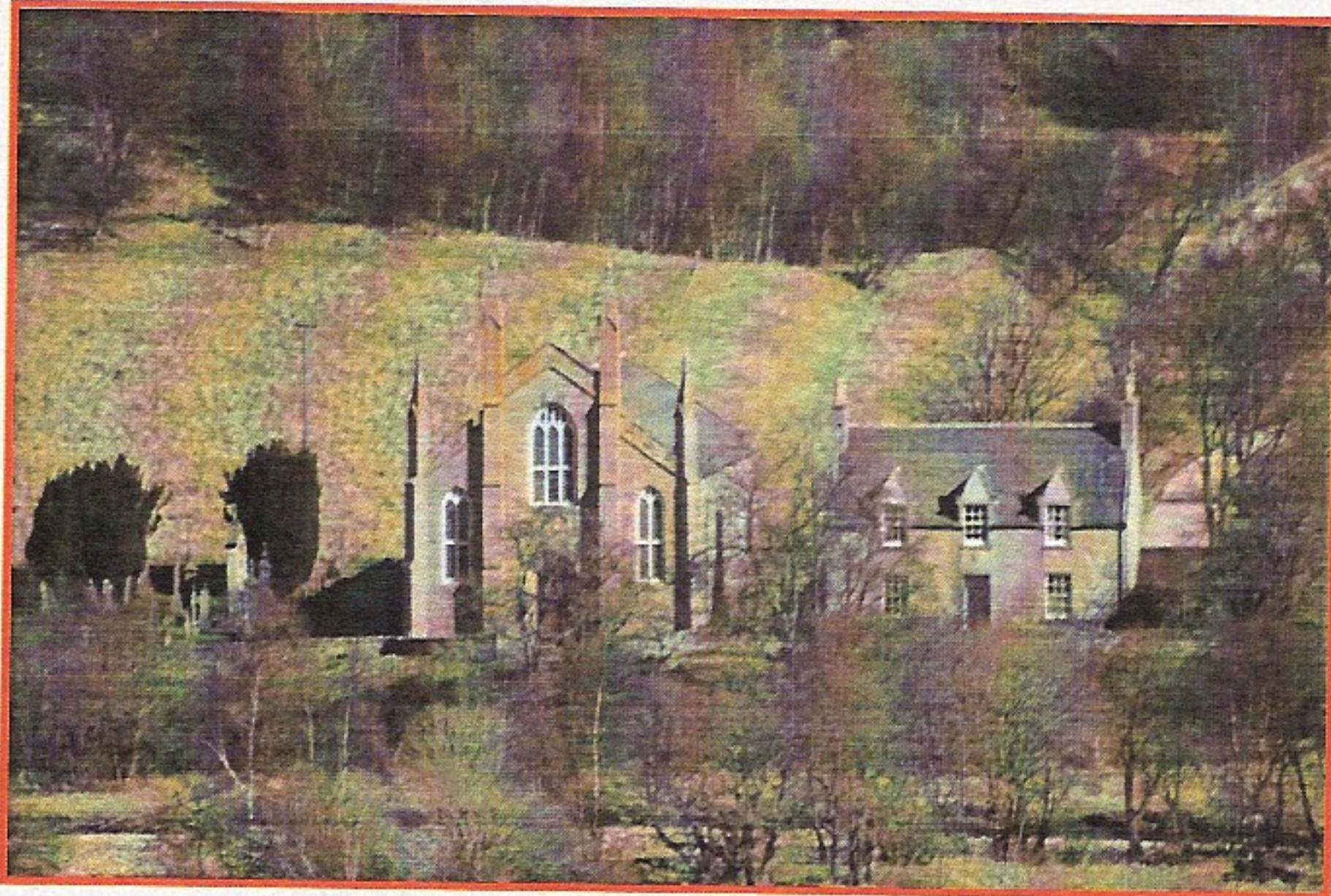
The remains of Chapel Keithock

Step back in time - The story of the Tombae Chapels

Prior to the uprising in 1715 there was a chapel situated at the junction of the Rivers Avon and the Livet. The priest, John Gordon, who was also farming at Minmore was having hassle from his Hanoverian neighbours and decided it was prudent to move away to the mainly Catholic Braes of Glenlivet. He settled in a barn near to the base of Tom Trumper at Scalan. This became the nucleus of the Scalan Seminary. There is no further mention of his chapel.

The old Chapel of Nevie, Chapel Christ, was built in the angle of the Nevie burn and the River Livet in 1746. Much of the graveyard and the building were washed away in a flood pre-1760. In "the Muckle Spat" of 1829 coffins were seen floating down the river. By 1869 no visible remains could be seen.

By 1745 when the second uprising took place there was another chapel at Tombae. This wasn't burnt down due to its proximity to other buildings; the contents were destroyed. John Tyrie was the priest and he was recruited by Gordon of Glenbucket to act as chaplain to the men fighting for Prince Charlie. He was wounded at Culloden and after lying low for several months made his way back to his home in the Braes of Glenlivet where he found his house at the Bochel destroyed; most likely by the same Hanoverian soldiers who spared the chapel.



The Church of The Incarnation, Tombae

Curlew



The next Tombae chapel was built at Kynakyle in 1788 in the haugh of the Livet. This one was built of stone and lime with a slate roof. The Muckle Spate of 1829 swept away much of the farmstead and buildings. The O.S. Map of 1846 and 1888 show a chapel in ruins and in 2010 nothing remains. The priest, John Gordon, who built the present chapel laid the foundation stone in 1827 well above the River Livet. It was finished just before the flood of 1829. The people were able to attend the 'first Mass' on Candlemas Day 1829. The church at Tombae was built to the designs of Mr John Gall of Aberdeen and dedicated to the honour of the Incarnation of Our Lord. The stone came from local quarries and was carted in by Catholics and non-Catholics, proof that the penal laws against Catholics were easing. Early in 2012 the decision was made to close Tombae Chapel. This majestic building has stood as a landmark for one hundred and eighty three years. During that time it has undergone a couple of changes. In 1843 Bishop Kyle built a school behind the altar which reduced the size of the interior but it was badly needed. It wasn't until 1904 a separate building was constructed as a school and meeting place. In 1937 renovation work was carried out on the church and a new altar built. Even then the population was starting to decrease and after two world wars the acceleration increased. Local amenities closed including the school but sufficient people regularly attended the church to warrant regular services and a resident priest. The trend was downhill. People moved away for work, property lay empty, and it became fashionable to have a holiday home, bought for a song. Many were non-Catholics and the numbers attending services fell. Fewer men were coming forward to train as priests. It was no longer "one priest, one church" - more like one priest with a number of churches. Tombae church, like so many in rural areas, had no resident priest but was served from Tomintoul. Bad winter weather meant closure for three months but it was always available for marriages, christenings and funerals, weather permitting. No longer; the doors will remain closed due to structural defects. The slates on the roof have started to slip allowing water to penetrate the plaster ceilings which are starting to fall. There is no money available for repairs in the near future and, until there is, this listed building will have to remain shut. The edifice will always be a landmark but with no soul. Come up the B 9008 from Tomnavoulin, pull up the hill and look to your left to Tombae where the chapel stands out. Jane and Bill McEwan who were prominent members of the Scaln Association are both resting in Tombae graveyard. They are sorely missed.

Curlews, Lapwings, Puffballs and Creamola Foam.

It is a beautiful spring day and I have just come back from a leisurely walk to the Scalan. As ever, my head is full of memories of family friends and joyous long summer holidays, when it never seemed to rain until just before we went back to school in August.

I was born at Crombie Cottage in the Braes and the house next door, Comley Bank, is my second home. Despite moving with my family to Edinburgh as a child, I have spent most of my summers here even after I grew up and lived in London, then Macau, near Hong Kong. My sons Joseph and Daniel were born in Hong Kong but came home here every summer until we moved back to Edinburgh permanently in 2000. Our trips to the Braes have never stopped and my sons and all their cousins come here regularly. They follow in my sisters' and my footsteps. They know every blade of grass, where to find the best trout, how to build dens in the wood, make a gang hut in the shed and to enjoy just being outdoors. They love this place and look on it as home.

They have been carried, pushed in pushchairs, have cycled and walked over the years with one destination in mind. . . .The Scalan. Sometimes when a little older they were even brave enough to camp there! They climb together up the hill from the Well of the Lecht, up and over the Ladder Hills down to the Scalan and back into the Braes. ”

I suppose we have instilled in them the same feeling of excitement the Scalan aroused in us. Visits to it were among the highlights of our summers starting in the 1950's. We lived with our grandmother, Mam the Bochel, in her tiny little house, Millbank, six of us girls, with Gran and 'Dad' - George the Bochel. No electricity; paraffin lamps, no bathroom, but an indoor toilet- quite a luxury then. Oh how we loved those days! Gran made the best broth and stew in the world on the open fire. We spent six weeks with her and only left the Braes to go to the Tomintoul Games and the Keith Show on Low's bus.

The Scalan always featured. Sometimes, if we were lucky, Alistair the Postie would give one or two of us a lift over to visit Sandy the Scalan. In the early days Old Fred was there too sitting on the bench outside the house. Sandy always gave us tea with evaporated milk. I have drunk black tea ever since. On other days, organised by Auntie Jean, we would pack picnics- usually Rich Tea biscuits, tomato and egg sandwiches which I hated but was always too hungry to refuse, and armed with our tins of Creamola Foam, we knew we would never die of hunger or thirst. Oh! the joys of scooping up the burn water to make the creamola foam drink; those little tins, so easy to carry and no e-coli to worry about. Sometimes we would collect the water from The Bishop's Well, and usually always took some back to our Gran.

We would make dams, fish, play hide and seek and if it was warm enough we would play in the burn. Then the highlight: we would tentatively open the door and enter the Scalan. There was always a frisson of fear - we knew the ghosts were there. We would wander through the rooms reading aloud from the newspapers which had been used to line the walls. Trips to America for ten pounds!! Old news: But interesting news, not like nowadays! dark rooms, little windows, bishop's bed, old worn staircase, outdoor toilet, to be avoided at all cost. Sign the visitors' book, year after year, generation after generation. Walking home through the fields, the air filled with the cries of the lapwings and curlews: Stamping on the puffballs: Exhausting but deliriously happy days: Home, past the church.

Sneaking in for a quick go on the organ, I once played some Beatles' numbers: Pumping away with my feet, pulling out all the stops, and later worried that I would be condemned to Hell for it. Looking at the pews....each one allocated to a family. Even now I cannot enter the church, without being met by the ghosts of past residents of the Braes. Right down there in the front, in her pert little hat, Dolly Russell, tiny next to her handsome, white-haired husband, Johnny; who owned the Braes Shop; Louie Milne, Dolly's sister, equally tiny but in another pew; Mairi Gordon, the school-teacher; Sydney and Roland, Lagual, her brothers. They came all the way from Lagual walking past Millbank one behind the other, never together. Bel and Willie Belnoe, with Jean, John, Edward and Isobel; Charles and Mary Auchnascraw and family; Ian Rhindu and his mother Meg; Magdalene Russell from the shop; Alec Smith. All the lads brought up by Mrs. McCabe at Springlea; Alec McCurdie, Charlie McCabe, Bernie Kenny The McGillivrays, Nellie and Charlie from Craigdhu; Mrs Stuart the Mill, with her whiskers, and the lovely gentle Annie Eskernullach and the Healy brother. In would march the boys from Auchavaich, Alistair, Norman, Ian and Francie all in their Sunday best. Mary; Comley Bank and Charlie Demick. I'm sure he was there - Uncle Charlie from the Bochel, the best singer in the church.

We Turners would borrow a pew as would all the Camerons - a family from Dundee who came every summer and stayed at Westview. We spent our days together in the Braes. And our cousins The Joneses, Maria, Veronica, Henry and Christopher would come up from Darlington later in July to fill another pew. Auntie Isobel would pop up from London gathering memories for her book 'Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet

After that the priest resided at Tombae and so a family moved into the Chapel House. The McGregors: she so tiny and he huge with a fancy moustache. Their sons joined in all the fun and, what bliss, they had electricity and a television and we could go every Thursday to watch Top of the Pops. In those days there were daily Masses, not to mention regular Benediction. We had to fit them into our action-packed days.

Chaos as we tried to find a hat to wear, sometimes using an old one of Gran's with little bits of net, school berets if nothing else came to hand and oh! wasn't it a joy when lace mantillas became fashionable.

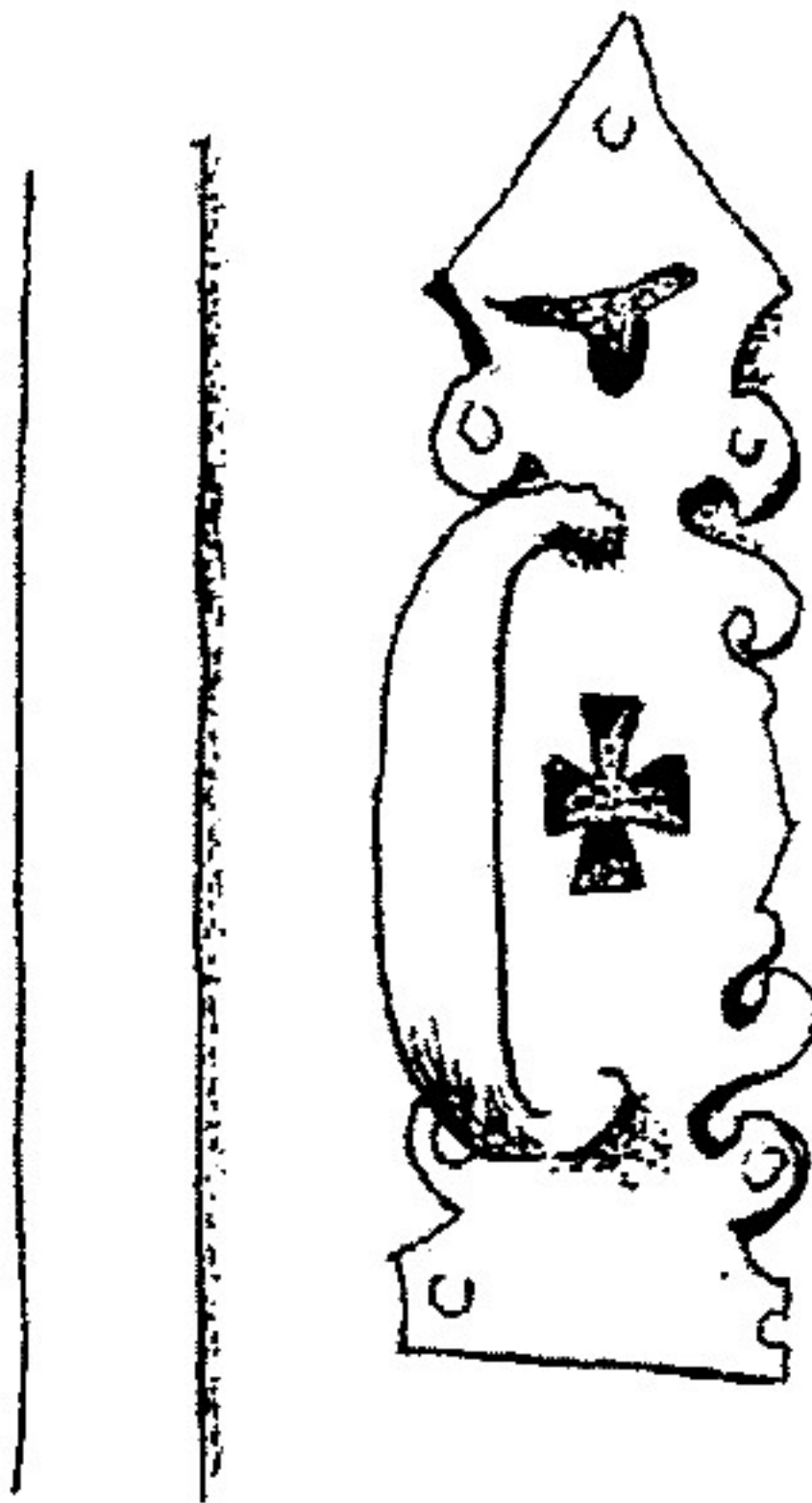
Ah yes in those days we were all fluent Latin speakers. We knew all the prayers and the whole Mass in Latin. Oldest sister, Helena, would lead the way on the weekdays when the altar boys were working on the farms. As girls, we were not allowed on to the altar but sat in the front row an honour in itself. We would answer swiftly and confidently:.....Introibo ad altare Dei Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam

The priest would be oblivious to the scuffles going on behind him as we tried to wrest control of the bells from Helena. We notched up enough Plenary Indulgences to last a lifetime! Go into the church and I defy you not to hear the dulcet tones of Irene Tocher singing her heart out and playing the organ. And we young ones would join 'the choir' and stand at the back next to the organ singing 'Bring the old faith back to Scotland, Our Lady of Aberdeen' and 'Come Holy Ghost Creator come, from thy bright heavenly throne' and 'Soul of my Saviour Sanctify my breast, Body of Christ be thou my saving guest'.

Uncle Charlie, Auntie Jean, John and Edward Belnoe, Allan, Gordon, Margaret and Isobel Auchnascraw.; Alex Smith and us, singing, singing, singing and having a good giggle at Irene as well... and in the background, then as now; the constant cawing of the crows. Was it Grannie Bochel, she who lived to 103, who claimed there would always be Catholics in the Braes as long as there were crows in the churchyard? Well, the crows are still here, the Catholics are still here albeit in fewer numbers. The Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, with its beautifully painted interior, is still here, and so is the Scalan, standing resolutely where it has always stood. Times have changed, the pews are empty; but the ghosts remain and the cries of the lapwings and curlews welcome you still as you head through the fields to that bastion of Catholicism, that wonderful piece of history; the place we call The Scalan.

The Scalan Sneck

According to the Concise Scots Dictionary 'sneck', a late 18th century word, means in English, a latch, a catch of a door. At the Annual Scalan Mass there is not the opportunity to get a good look at the sneck on Scalan's main door. With so many people milling about after the Mass meeting friends and catching up with their news, Scalan's beautiful sneck is likely to be overlooked. In a paper in the Innes Review, Spring 1995, Scalan Reconstructed, the sneck is mentioned: 'New front and back doors were fitted, the main entrance (now a divided door) retaining its original 'Norfolk latch' with across incorporated in the fretted design? A footnote gives the information that a 'door sneck' appears in the Scalan Accounts for 1789.



The drawing gives an idea of how handsome this sneck is. If this is the ‘original’ Scalan door sneck, it might be considered remarkable that it has survived on probably several replacement doors since the 1780s, when alterations and improvements were taking place under the supervision of Bishop Hay,; but the cost of replacing it would be reason enough to make sure that the sneck was never lost or discarded. The building materials for the inside and outside renovation of Scalan would have been available locally in time 1780s and there were certainly local masons, smiths and wrights. But what of the‘ blacksmith who made the sneck; was he local? I suppose that1 is unanswerable, but it is intriguing. If a local blacksmith made it, and this does seem likely, was he given a design to copy or was it his own idea to incorporate the cross within the whole design?

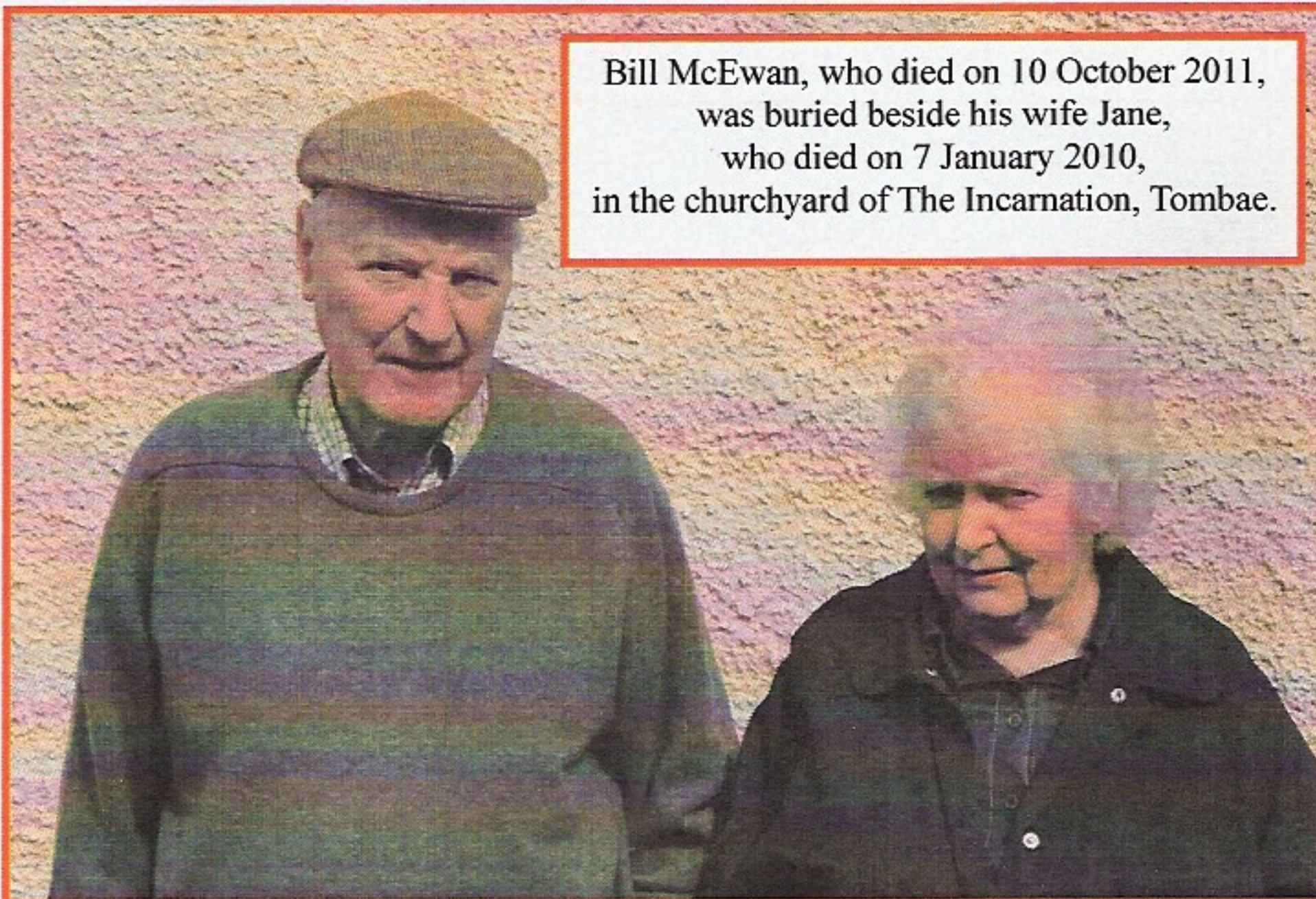
One’s thoughts can wander over so many intriguing puzzles in regard to Scalan, butone other thought came to mind while writing this. How did all the glass for the windows at Scalan get safely transported and from where?

The Right Reverend John Jukes OFM Conv, titular bishop of Strathearn, emeritus auxiliary bishop in Southwark, and in his retirement, parish priest of St. Margaret's, Huntly, died peacefully on the morning of Monday 21st November 2011, aged 88 years, in the 65th year of religious life, the 59th year of his priesthood, having been a Bishop for 31 years. The photo shows him preaching at the Annual Scalan Mass in July 2007.



Grant them, O Lord, the Glory of the Resurrection.

Bill McEwan, who died on 10 October 2011, was buried beside his wife Jane, who died on 7 January 2010, in the churchyard of The Incarnation, Tombae.



An Icon For Scotland

One of the little Chapels which, together with Scalan, lie within a pastoral area stretching from Tomintoul to Lossiemouth, is that of Our Lady of the Assumption, in Dufftown. The intention of this piece is not to dwell on the melancholy effects of *Serpula lacrymans* (Dry Rot). Those of us who have experienced the uncertainties of the floor can easily sympathise with others more elderly who might have more pressing needs. 'Stand not before the toilet, dear friend, lest you descend into the abyss' Together with our parish priest an enormous effort has been made to raise the necessary funds to restore this beautiful chapel. Now with the support of the diocese and Historic Scotland we shall in 2012 see restoration work begin. We are delighted, that is to say all thirty or so of us. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the effort and enthusiasm of parishioners, which includes those of Sacred Heart, Aberlour, has been quite humbling. It must be seen as an act of faith in the future. Without hope we are nowhere and so it is with hope that we now venture bravely

Sometimes however it may be useful to listen to devil's advocates or to 'deconstruct' as they say. The question has been asked and understandably: what is the point of all this expenditure of money and effort when in twenty or thirty years time there will be hardly any of us left? So while the joiners are banging away and the brickies mixing their mortar, we might pause for a moment and reflect on what we might really be about.

It could be said "All we can do is pray" and then perhaps 'Oh God give us more people so it won't all have been in vain' but then again, perhaps not! More true to the general feeling might be 'We were here in numbers despite difficulties in the past. We are still here today and now we look to tomorrow'. Of course it would be great to see people crowding through the doors and to think it has all been thanks to our efforts.

What if we look at it from the perspective not just of ourselves but neighbouring parishes too, neighbouring diocese, even the whole of Scotland? Where can you go that similar deconstructive questions are not being asked? It might be comforting to realise that we are not alone in prayer any more than we are in faith or in problems. The need might not be to fill churches so much as to fill the hearts of the lonely, the lost, the discouraged and even the proud. Having said that, walls and roofs do come in handy sometimes in the north of Scotland!

Here I should confess some personal experience. Since becoming a Catholic in 1966, it has been very clear to me that prayer is not so much about composing eloquent phrases and pious ideas but simply and quietly being part of the prayer of the Church. There are some which have been blessed with her authority and approval; for example, that which accompanies dedication of a family to the Sacred Heart. That prayer which expresses the hope of being thus reunited includes the phrase ‘living and dead’. We all said it and I joined in thinking little of it. Soon after I was prompted to research my family history to discover that a brother of my great-great-great grandfather had taken his own life two hundred years ago while mentally unstable. I had never before heard of him or had any idea of his existence. On a particular day when I was in despair having just received a document which failed to establish a vital link, a man turned up at our farm. He came out of the blue with no knowledge of my research. He had with him two hundred year old letters and he pointed at two hitherto unknown and faded pictures hanging on either side of the Sacred Heart image and identified them as the ancestors I sought.

Many people will have similar stories; they are often about sadness, loss and human frailty. As in that case sometimes we don’t really understand what we are praying for. After all, the phrase ‘Thy will Be Done’ doesn’t say what that will is. We simply know it is God’s will so we want to go along with it.

On the subject of someone with a mental instability, about a year ago BBC 4 screened a programme called ‘The Madness of Peter Howson’. It concerned his commission to create a portrait of St John Ogilvie. Although he recalled the idea had come to him in a vision, the whole project seemed to be dogged with difficulty. There were problems with funding and a whole side of a building had to be taken down to accommodate the original canvas. Peter suffered periods of depression and struggled to continue. When at last he thought he had completed what was by then a reduced canvas, he found himself making seemingly endless changes as he became less confident about his work. In the end he abandoned it and started all over again from scratch. His final work he did quite quickly almost as if ‘off-pat’.

There is little doubt in my mind as to the spiritual authenticity of that final work. Someone who has suffered so much in his own mind, had such tenacity of purpose and himself a non-Catholic, must have had some very special grace. Perhaps it is that in these cases, quiet faith can surpass all misgivings and uncertainties and become a vehicle for divine inspiration. It has been presented to the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

So while the builders are about their work could we suggest one little thing? Perhaps that portrait could be reproduced in miniature and form the focus of a prayer for Scotland. Ask and it shall be given’ Jesus said, and in the context of rejuvenating the Church such a request would never go unheeded. Of that we can be certain but even more so if such a prayer went with the full authority of the Catholic hierarchy.

Then will come the day when our churches will be full again and priests’ houses returned to their original purpose. Those who were lost will come back and our chapels will shelter future generations.

Points of Interest

1. Scalan cottage.

I can now report that the new windows are in place and painted white. The front door has been hung and is again green. The scaffolding is now in place and work has started to demolish the chimney stack and some of the gable end. It has to be carried out with care, the stones will be cleaned and where possible reused. Weather permitting it should be completed well before the Annual Mass. Unfortunately the stone mason wasn’t available during the earlier warm weather and as we now know it is wet, cold and windy; more like the normal Scalan spring. The skylarks, lapwings, oystercatchers and curlews arrive and leave and won’t settle to nest until the weather improves.

2. The buildings

have been cleaned out and all burnable material has gone. The scrap metal has been gathered up but the fenced land round the Scalan buildings still requires checking for glass, wire etc. Any volunteers!

3. The Eskemullach car park

is not now in use but you can drive with care up to the new one up the track. The Crown Estate has provided a notice board with a map, seating and a hide to watch the birds. The two ponds were visited by frogs but unfortunately the majority of the frog spawn has been frosted. The ducks come and go to the smaller wild pond.

Some Scalan Personalities.

Alexander Farquharson: Student 1771-1775; Master 1784-1787.

Alexander Farquharson was born in 1758 at Minmore, Glenlivet, a second cousin to John Farquharson. Alexander was one of only a few who spoke fluent Gaelic. He was a student at the college for four years, entering the Scots College Rome in 1775. After his ordination in 1784 he returned to Scalan as master, his first post in the mission. He received his training for the priesthood under John Patterson, an excellent master and a good role model. Unfortunately he did not have the ability of John Patterson. On taking up the post he immediately had trouble with the Scalan farm tenants who wanted a larger share of the seminary’s rental (they wanted to pay less rent). He refused to meet their demands that year was very bad which greatly increased the price of meal and fodder. Bishop Hay considered him a bad manager and on visiting Scalan was appalled at the waste of money and the misappropriation of funds. He was appointed to The Cabrach, but seven years later, it would appear that he had got himself into further and more serious financial difficulties and left for Rome in 1794 to avoid conviction which could have resulted in the death penalty! Alexander Farquharson wandered round Europe and South America for a number of years unable to return to his Glenlivet home. He died in London in poverty aged fifty three years.

John Gordon: Student 1771-1774

John Gordon was born in 1760 at Landends in the Enzie. He was a nephew of John Geddes (later Bishop) and a cousin of John Gordon who was appointed Vice-rector in 1776 and Rector of the Scots College, Valladolid in 1798. John Gordon entered Scalan in 1771 where he spent three years studying under John Patterson before travelling to Valladolid. He completed the course but returned to Edinburgh in 1784 for his ordination by Bishop John Geddes. He served the Mission in Aberdeen from 1785 to 1797. In 1799 Scalan Seminary was moved to Aquhorties (by Inverurie). A new Scalan was emerging, one more able to cope with the needs of the growing, changing Church. John Gordon was appointed the first Procurator, a post he held until 1807. He moved to Eastlands and became Factor at Blairs in 1808, a post he held until his death in 1823.

John Anderson: Student 1771-1772 Assistant Master July-August 1793

John Anderson was born at Glenbuchet in 1758. He spent a year as a student (1771-1772) when he travelled to Ratisbon (Regensburg, Germany) leaving in 1781. Bishop Hay appointed him Assistant Master at Scalan in charge of the boys and their studies. He was unordained as yet and after a month left for Wurzburg where he was ordained as a Benedictine priest in 1792. He remained there until his death in 1828. John Anderson never served on the Scottish Mission.

Donald Stuart: Student 1771-1772

Donald Stuart was born in 1756 at Strathavon. He entered Scalan in 1771 when consecutive bad winters and summers meant poverty was not far away for hundreds of farming folk. Master Patterson was willing to take in students but found many could not afford to pay for their keep. Donald Stuart’s family were in this category. In 1772 he entered The Scots College Rome where he studied and was ordained in 1781. He returned to Scotland and took up a post in Tomintoul in 1783. By 1788 he had built a chapel just off the main street. St Michael’s was built in 1836 near to the site of the old one. 1804 saw him moved to a new Mission in Dundee. Many people were leaving the rural areas for the more lucrative industrial regions springing up in the Lowlands. New churches were being built. These required priests, otherwise the Faith would be lost. Priests like Donald Stuart were being sent from their safe rural parishes to take up the challenge. How did he cope? Fourteen years is a long time so one can assume he enjoyed the work and the change. In 1818 he returned to Elgin dying there in 1820.

Andrew Deason (or Dawson): Student, 1772-1777; Master, August 1787 - June 1788

Andrew was born in 1762 or 64 at Haddoch in the Cabrach and was enrolled at Scalan in 1772, where he spent five years before leaving for the Scots College Valladolid.

where he studied and was ordained in 1785. He returned to Scotland the same year and took up a post in the Shenval for two years, before being appointed master at Scalan in August 1787.

Bishop Hay chose him to succeed Alexander Farquharson, who had proved not to be a good master. He had run up large debts with the local traders and, on inspection, the accounts did not tally. The Bishop paid off all known debts, re-engaged the wrights and heatherers to complete work on the chapel. The new master was given a set of rules for the running of the Seminary and a sum of money for every-day costs. The Bishop departed knowing he had left a good honest man in charge. Bishop Geddes was asked to help Andrew if he requested it. Things didn't go well for the new master. The men working on the chapel demanded more money. He refused them so they downed tools. Janet Roe the housekeeper for the last seventeen years had a row with Magi, the under servant. Janet left to take up a job with Alexander Farquharson at the Cabrach. The Master wasn't sorry to see her go and Magi promptly cleaned the house thoroughly; then set about delousing the boys. The petty thieving stopped and conditions at Scalan greatly improved. Martinmas was the time of payments and Master Dawson wrote to Bishop Geddes detailing what money he would require and why. He requested £84 sterling but was only sent £40 and told to use credit to spread the outlay into spring. He did not expect this and wrote again in the New Year pointing out he had restored order and discipline. He felt neglected, alone with the boys and the servants in an alien place. He was a sick man and Bishop Hay suspected he might have consumption and sent him to Huntly for two weeks in January. On his return he was in better spirits and determined to carry on. By Easter 1778 the consumption had taken hold and he was advised by the doctor to leave Scalan but with no immediate replacement he hung on until June 1788. When Bishop Hay visited Scalan he sent the Master to stay near his family at the Cabrach. Where he died in September of that year at the age of 26 years. Bishop Hay stayed in very close contact with Scalan for the next five years; in fact he stayed there as Master until 1793 when James Sharp was appointed as master.

Bishop Geddes' Memoirs of the '45.

The following excerpts are taken from an article in the Scottish Catholic Directory for 1838, p.40, entitled "Some Account of the State of the Catholic Religion in Scotland during the Years 1745, 46 and 47".

"...for a considerable period, the persecution against them had been nowise severe. The penal laws against them hanging over their heads - they were excluded from all employments, and from time to time they were exposed to the malice of their enemies... The Scottish Catholics were at the restoration of the family of the Stuarts to the throne to be wondered at... The Scottish Catholics were discorporated to oppression - it was natural for them to hope likely to relieve them and put them again in possession of their free-born citizens.

"The Bishop (Hugh Macdonald) proceeded to Moidart, on the Borrodale, was the Prince, still on board the vessel on his return from France, and was under the name and disguise of a Frenchman. The Bishop was introduced to him, and the Prince gave him counsel and advice. The Bishop candidly told him that the country was not prepared for his reception, and that his coming had not been expected. He followed - that any attempt at the present time would be dangerous and probably ruin his best friends - and therefore his only chance was to return to France immediately in the same ship, and wait for a more favourable opportunity. This advice was little relished by the young Adversary. He was little more consulted. All of this I have heard related by Hugh Macdonald's own mouth."

clandestinely in the priest's house there at Shenvall was Bishop Hugh MacDonald, the first Vicar Apostolic of the Highland District, and one of the great names of our Scottish Catholic History. He was a "heather priest", one whose entire preparation for the priesthood took place on Scottish soil, at Scalán in fact, where he was ordained on 18 September 1725, in the old house above the Bishop's well. Realising that the Prince was not to be dissuaded, he reluctantly blessed the Jacobite Standard at Glenfinnan, well aware that it was likely to bring devastation to the Highlands and the Church, which it did. He was eventually arrested and put on trial in Edinburgh in 1755. He was sentenced to perpetual banishment from the kingdom, but slipped back to the north to continue to lead the Highland Vicariate from Shenvall (which was outside his vicariate). Bishop Geddes' memoirs are a mixture of his own boyhood memories and many a night listening to Bishop MacDonald's reminiscences.

"On the 19 August, the Prince's Royal Standard was displayed at Glenfinnan, a part of Moidart, Arisaig, Knoydart, Morar, Glengarry and Loch, their respective Chiefs, and composed a considerable which the Prince led to Edinburgh. Mr Allan Macdonald's men as their Chaplain, and as Confessor to McGillis went as Chaplain to Glengarry's men. These, I Priests who were with the Highlanders until after the excepting that Mr James Leslie was assisting to the dying the day of that engagement. They wore the Highland pistol, and went under the name of Captain."

In those days it was not possible to address priests as "Father", since discretion was required. It was against the law for them to be in the country at all.

"About the same time, Mr John Gordon, Missionary in in the Enzie, preached a sermon in his chapel at Homie young men to enlist in the Prince's service; and when young men accepted from him the white cockade." (cause)

John Geddes, the author of these observations, was Rector of Scalán from 3 September, 1762 until 15 December, 1767. He oversaw the building of the house at Scalán which we can visit today. In other memoirs he notes that it was ready for use "about St. Andrew's Day", 1767.

to be continued..

Thanks are due to Mr. Andrew Nicoll, Keeper of the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh, for his customary unfailing courtesy and cooperation in the writing of this article.