

news

'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 ...' (Rev. John Geddes, Rector of Scalan 1762-65)



The Annual Pilgrimage Mass on 2 July was blessed with the best weather in many years, and a large congregation enjoyed the

sunshine. Eight new members were enrolled. The chief celebrant was Bishop Conti, supported by his now retired Vicar General (and our President) Mgr. Copland. Mgr. John Copland gave the homily which is printed overleaf. Several regulars were on the altar: Frs. Eddie McGhee and Michael Briody from the deep southwest (with Fr Charles McFadden of the Glasgow Archdiocese) and Deacon Bill Joss from the Cathedral in Aberdeen. Deacon Peter MacDonald, who organised singers and music, represented St Peter's in the Castlegate of Aberdeen.

When Father Sandy MacWilliam left the Braes of Glenlivet in 1947 after having been inspired by Scalán, 'just over the hill from Chapelton', it was to become the last parish priest with sole responsibility for Aberdeen's oldest Catholic church. His move was from one historic site to another, since in 1804 the first High Mass to be celebrated in Scotland after the Reformation took place in the hidden chapel at the far end of what later become Union Street. Peter MacDonald is a member of the Scalán Association, mindful of the penal times when priests were few and far between, and as such a worthy successor to those who have gone before.

Interior refurbishment has begun at Scalán and locally-based members of the committee are keeping their usual eye on the premises. Bill and Jane McEwan's most recent visit was to turn off the water in the toilet block, where an area of fallen ceiling has been repaired without charge, by local builder Terry McIntosh. A good deal of work on the ground floor of the old college has been done by Beverly & Sons of Rhynie, with door lintels and slats attended to and rafters braced and cleaned. The most obvious change is the restoration of a partition five feet to the left of the front door, and new plaster work, drying slowly.

George Beverly, brother of William, speaks of the Scalán assignment as 'a very interesting job'. The firm has experience in restoring old buildings as a developing aspect of the builder's trade, and already a section of the original wattle and daub has been framed behind perspex for display. He was interested to learn that the Aberdeen company which tendered for the job was the same one which advised against any work being done on Scalán in 1949 - advice which was contradicted by the architect Ian Lindsay. George Beverly's son and nephew have been doing the actual work at Scalán. His father is now retired, and his greatgrandfather was the first to set up in business outside the village of Rhynie: Scalán is in the safe hands of a family firm which is used to country ways and conditions. By next summer the ground floor will have been transformed.

Ann Dean's illustration opposite is of the Green Isle of St Finan, Eilean Fhianan, and the latest West Highland pilgrimage as reported on p. 17. As usual the contents cover a range of Scalán-related themes from the Duchess of Gordon's pew to Pluscarden Abbey, as this little magazine moves into its second decade.

Homily at Scalán

Right Rev. Mgr. John McIntyre

Gospel of the 13th Sunday of the Year, Mark 5,21-43, 'the curing of the' woman in the crowd, and the bringing back to life of the daughter of Jairus.

The miracles of the Gospel do not always strike directly home to us. In our world the great signs of the presence of the divine and its power over creation and dark forces are not usually revealed: we live out our salvation where the dead are not raised and the incurable are not cured. For us these Gospel signs are primarily a language of hope, speaking to us of Jesus and of those truths by which we are saved: that in Baptism we died with Christ and will rise with him; that our earthly drama, like Jairus and the afflicted woman, are exemplars of the virtue of Hope in which we ourselves live and trust that we will die.

It is with that virtue - the virtue of hope - that those asked to speak at this yearly Mass at Scalán are above all concerned. We are here to remember the past and pray for the future, and the link between the two is the hope which supported Scalán folk and which will support the Church in Scotland entering a new century and a new age.

Courage and Perseverance

The history of this place, so lovingly unfolded in Or Watts' fine book, is a story of Christian hope - of hoping against hope, of going forward with trust in times of little comfort. The courage and perseverance shown at such times is the first but not the only aspect of hope which inspired this little college. Let us pause to think of one or two of those dark moments.

If we look at the very beginnings, it was a black year for Scottish Catholics, 1716 - hopes for a Jacobite restoration dashed, James VIII back in France, Bishop Nicolson only recently released from prison, the countryside bristling with soldiers and spies - that Bishop Gordon brought three or four young boys here from the far West Highlands where the first seminary had been. What an act of faith it was for him to lodge his 'hopeful apprentices' in a turf house over there beyond the stream and bring young Alexander Smith, later to be a bishop, to guide their first studies.

As we know that faith in the Lord was matched in an even darker and dangerous time thirty years later by the courage and faith of William Outhie, the convert priest who brought the college back to life in the impossibly difficult years after Culloiden. How strong

the temptation to despair must have been as he went from one hidingplace to another with only one 'hopeful apprentice', the brave young John Gordon, to share the danger of arrest which did not go away even when they could risk coming home and raising a house again on the charred foundations at Scalan.

The story told by Or Watts is a whole series of examples of such courage and perseverance, not least of them the time when Bishop Hay, terribly short of priests for his scattered missions, came as rector himself and did the work of teaching and administration and spiritual guidance in addition to running the Church in Scotland and writing his books.

It is always easy to list reasons for pessimism - in our own time the lapsing of the young, the rising tide of secularism, the attraction of rival and less demanding spiritualities. Perhaps we need the gritty straightforward faith of people like Hay, living in another age of scepticism and mockery - the age of Hume and Gibbon and Voltaire - who responded to the spirit of the times by sitting down amid all his cares and writing a book defending and explaining the Christian belief in miracles.

Study

This brings me to another aspect of the hope which built these walls and inspired the life of the place. My heading is 'Study'. Reading Dr Watts' account it comes strongly home to us how solid the academic tradition was here, how well prepared these youngsters were for the scholarly world of the French or Spanish or Roman centres which they would enter in most cases as mere teenagers. The evidence is there in the surviving books of their library, comparable to that of major academic institutions of the time, and in the later careers of people like Paul Macpherson and the wayward genius Alexander Geddes, a name still to be quoted in the histories of Scriptural scholarship.

We surely need in our time to respect and pursue academic excellence, to resist the dumbing-down which allows a Catholic newspaper - not a Scottish one, hasten to add - to entrust the answering of its readers' 'Doubts and Queries' to a man who attacks the English Missal's translation of the words of Consecration (a betrayal, he says, of 'Scripture, Tradition, Sacred Liturgy and received Wisdom') all because he cannot distinguish between the present and future forms of the Latin verb. Even non-Latinists will realise that such a level of ignorance would have amazed the boys on the benches in the schoolroom here; but of course my plea is not for Latin specifically, but for the encouragement of serious scholarship of every sort required in the Church's work of evangelisation.

Prayer

Courage and Perseverance, Study ... and the word that completes the Scalan picture, Prayer. I need not detail the strong spiritual regime of the little community for whom Bishop Gordon wrote his Rule in the conviction that 'without piety learning is but a sword in a madman's hand,' or emphasise the depth of religious fervour which kept it going against all odds. But I would remind you that amid all his other cares Bishop Hay wrote substantial devotional works - *The Sincere Christian* and *The Devout Christian* - which nourished the prayer-life and the faith of countless readers for a full century after his death.

I will leave you with a picture of prayer - one of the most touching scenes in the whole history: of John Paterson, the faithful, talented young man who gave his whole priestly life to making the work of Scalan fruitful, breathing his last in the master's bedroom up there, with the leaders of the small Catholic community of Scotland, Bishop Hay and Bishop Geddes and Bishop MacDonald - something he had prayed for - leading the prayers for the dying about his bedside.

Scalan in 1798

Survey of the Province of Moray

In Glenlivet there has been a Roman Catholic establishment for almost 100 years, on the banks of the Crombie, in a very sequestered situation among the mountains which separate this district from the parishes of Cabrach, Glenbucket and Strathdon. It was chosen on account of its being so much removed from public view, in those times when the Christians of the Church of Rome were, by the civil law of Britain, and both its reformed churches, exposed to persecution. Its Gaelic appellation, SCALAN, implies *an obscure*, or *shadowy place*; it may be translated as the *dark* or *gloomy land*; and it denotes also the place where, in the days of other years, the hunter stalked in ambush for the bounding roe of the hill.

The school is properly the Bishop's seminary for educating a few of the Catholic youth in the principles of grammar and morality, and training them to a regularity of discipline in preparation for the colleges on the Continent; where they are, in general, entered into holy orders: although, on some occasions, the sacrament of ordination has been administered in the Scalan. The school at present contains from 8 to 12 students under the care of a clergyman, who conducts their education and superintends the management of the farm and the house. It is now proposed to move this seminary to the vicinity of Aberdeen; where it is to be established on a more respectable foundation, and conducted on more enlarged and comprehensive scale.

This chapter of the book was written by a Rev. Mr Leslie of Oarkland: does any reader know where this is, or even who he was? Judging by his sympathetic attitude (above, and in what follows) Leslie seems to have been a High Anglican, either of the Scottish

Episcopalian Church or else the Church of England.

The valley of Pluscarden is the only district of the country which seems to suffer by the substitution of the Reformed for the Roman Catholic religion, by which they enjoyed the pompous establishment of the priory in the midst of this sequestered vale. The minds of the people were soothed through the day, and soothed even during the stillness of the midnight hour, by the solemn sound of the consecrated bells, calling the venerable inmates to their statutory devotions; and they had access to the consolations of 16 holy men in every season of distress, with the free and easy accommodation of the most splendid social worship.

They had the means also of educating in the most commodious manner their little ones, in a share of the literature of the times; and numberless important advantages beside must have accrued from the wealth of this establishment, expended upon them, and from the resort of strangers of every rank. upon amusement, business or devotion, to this magnificent sacred and hospitable abode. Now all is cold and silent, forlorn and melancholy desolation: every thing pleasant and useful is vanished.

Pluscarden Abbey has been restored in modern times. To make a double link with men who have featured in these columns, Peter Anson dedicated his 1959 book A Monastery in Moray to Ian Cordon Lindsay. The timing of the work depended on the latter's availability, as noted in Ronald Hamilton's The Pluscarden Story (1977): 'In the Spring of 1946 PAX was able to report the glad news that "the architect of Pluscarden, Major Ian Lindsay, has been demobilized from the army."



On Monday, 12 April 1948, an advance party of five monks known cheerfully as "the Pluscarden Pioneers", left Prinknash for the North.' Hamilton went on to explain why they wore white habits instead of Benedictine black: 'The Anglican Community at Caldey, to which Prinknash traced its origins, had worn white in honour of Our Lady.' The illustration is from Hamilton's book.

At Pluscarden

Alasdair Roberts

A postcard came from Pluscarden Abbey from a Fr Martin who seemed to know Deirdre and me: 'Martin Farrelly showed us pictures from his time with you at Morar on the way to Canna. When are you going to visit Pluscarden? It is the only piece of the jigsaw that is missing: Peter Anson, Caldey, Prinknash, Martin Farrelly, etc. Perhaps you could give us a talk on some historical theme.' It didn't take long to work out that the writer and artist - he drew the jigsaw - was Father Jim Birrell who left parish work in the Kincorth district of Aberdeen to become a monk at Pluscarden.

I once helped Abbot Dilworth with a church history weekend for lay people at Fort Augustus Abbey, but addressing Benedictines themselves sounded like a bigger challenge. I hesitated. However next day a second card came from Pluscarden, this time a request from the librarian for back issues so that he could bind the first ten years of *Scalan News*. A first-ever communication from the Abbey and now two in two days - with no conferring in the monastic silence had the appearance of a miracle. I said I would go.

Elgin is far from Aberdeen (further from Morar) and I had hardly ever visited Pluscarden despite regular calls to pilgrimage on the second Sunday in July. It was always Pluscarden or Scalan, and the monastery in Moray 'wasn't my period' - not Pluscarden minded. That was before I went there in October and came away with the house and its holy people preying on my mind and praying on my behalf (yours too). It would be too personal to write about the effect they had, so I won't.

However I will say that monks who are regularly read to at mealtimes make good listeners. I presented 'Changing Priesthood in the Highlands' to men who mostly knew nothing of the subject: the Abbey attracts postulants from all over Britain and beyond. My wife, who has been a Catholic for longer and knows about these things, said they would all be nodding into their cowls at four in the afternoon because of being up since four in the morning. In fact they laughed at the jokes and asked good questions, which doesn't happen everywhere.

There were two other men in the guest house, and (unlike the monks, whom the guests joined for formal refectory occasions) we talked over our self-help meals: despite their guidance I managed to fill the kitchen with smoke from the toaster, causing a fire alarm to break the monastic silence! One was a retired Latin teacher who grew up in the Glasgow area but now lives north of Inverness at Golspie. When I mentioned Scalan (as you do) this Chris McGuire told me about taking his wife for a first visit to Glenlivet in July.



After exploring the deserted building he went to sign the visitors' book and there, from the day before, was the signature of his twin brother Marius from Glasgow - no conferring then either, although they do keep in touch.

I added this gratefully to my store of minor miracles, noting the names for use here, and thought no more about it until after a final morning session in the side aisle before departure. That was the Community Mass when, by another coincidence, cheery Jim Birrell from Kincorth was chief celebrant - transformed for me, as Father Martin, into something like an angel. A small congregation of visitors sat level with the altar. One was a restless toddler who several times almost broke through to join the community. It was obvious from the smile of the hospitable guest master Dom Gabriel Potter that he would have been welcome.

Then the monks processed out and the visitors left in ones and twos: by their greetings it was obvious that some were known to each other. I did not say goodbye to Chris McGuire because he was in the middle of a confused conversation with the toddler's parents. He did not know them, but they knew him - as Marius McGuire from Glasgow! In the South Transept I made my farewells to the Prior Dom Giles Conacher (who knows the old Samalaman seminary at Glenuig), Dom Augustine Holmes the librarian (who agreed to bind my battered Blundell Vol. 2) and finally to the archangelic Dom Gabriel whose last words were: 'I thought that was you with the fire alarm - you still smell of burnt toast!'

. The drawing is by Martin Farrelly, who learned his stained glass skills from Dom Ninian Sloane and encountered his master's see-through Madonna this year at the bridge joining Canna to Sanday, as described in the summer Issue.

Peter's Friends

Peter A. Anson

Taken from A Roving Recluse (1946) and mostly about the time when Anon was living at Harbour Head, Macduff, this extract appears for the sake of the light it casts on his friendship with Ian Lindsay, the two of them in different ways acting as saviours of Scalan.

I formed a new circle of friends, some of whom were prominent in the Scottish Nationalist movement. Sir Alexander MacEwen, at one time Provost of Inverness, became a regular and frequent correspondent. I forget how many times Lady MacEwen made me welcome in that attractive house at North Kessock on the Black Isle, with a view of Inverness and the mountains beyond. This friendship with Sir Alexander, based on many common interests and ideals, only ended with his death in 1941.

There were Neil and Daisy Gunn, the former one of Scotland's most famous novelists. Our friendship was bound up more with our mutual interest in the sea fisheries of Scotland than in literature. I was always sure of a welcome at the Gunn's house in Inverness, and latterly in that tiresomely inaccessible farm outside Dingwall. I had often admired the paintings of Keith Henderson before coming to Scotland. Here again I wish he and his wife had not insisted on making their home in a remote corner of Lochaber, otherwise I am sure we would have met more often.

It was a chance visit to Sir Compton Mackenzie on the Isle of Barra in February 1936 that decided my own migration from England to Scotland. The war prevented more than one visit to Eric Linklater in his equally far-off home in the Orkneys. It was not so difficult to stay with another author George Scott-Moncrieff - for he lived within easy reach of Edinburgh. So also did the sculptor Hew Lorimer, who, like Scott-Moncrieff and his family, became a Catholic later on.

In Edinburgh I was always certain of the hospitality of two architect friends - Reginald Fairlie and Ian G. Lindsay. I collaborated with the latter in the designs for a small Catholic church at Invergarry, near Fort Augustus. Ian Lindsay and his wife introduced me to Dr George MacLeod, the Leader of the Iona Community, the most loyal of friends, despite (or maybe because of) our persistent arguments on points of theology, liturgy and ceremonial. Frequent

disagreements never prevented some most enjoyable visits to the Community House on Iona, where I met numerous Presbyterian ministers and laymen, some of whom have since become intimate friends and whose manses have offered me hospitality.

Priests of the Aberdeen diocese, most of whom owned cars, frequently called on me before the war. Not far off was Rothiemay Castle, where I was often welcomed by its Catholic laird, Colonel Ian G. Forbes. Two of his sons were Benedictine monks at Ampleforth and two daughters nuns. In England it never struck me that the profession of Catholic author-artist was anything unusual - I was merely one of a crowd. In Scotland it was quite different. So far as I was able to discover, I was the only Papist earning a living by literary and artistic work in the vast diocese of Aberdeen. Then came the war, and with it a ban on travel from September 1939. As much from necessity as from choice, I seldom left the fishing port which was now my home. I became much more of a recluse than a rover!

Readers Write

In the last issue I suggested that the artist 'JK' whose initials are on the Scalan cards might have been James Keenan, father of the two priests Steven and Peter Keenan - either that or a sister. However another James Keenan is mentioned in a 1977 booklet *The Bells of St Mary's, Aberdeen* written by Mgr Alexander MacWilliam. The Cathedral in Huntly Street has just acquired a new set of bells, but that is another story. According to Mgr MacWilliam, 'Collections in St Mary's during the period from August 1876 to December 1878 brought in an average of about £11 a month while an Oratorio in the Cathedral in which Mr James Keenan (Fr Patrick Keenan's father) took the lead realised £37.13.8d:

The Rev. Patrick Keenan (1880-1934) was born in Aberdeen and served Sacred Heart Torry, across the Dee, for fifteen years - his longest charge in a life plagued by ill health. His father James who led the choral singing in 1877 was almost certainly a brother of the two priests mentioned above, and may have been born, as they were, near Enniskillen in Co. Fermanagh. The clergy brothers were men of great talents. The older helped to found most of Dundee's Catholic institutions and was honoured by Pope Pius IX as Dr Stephen Keenan for his preaching and writing. His brother Peter qualified as a surgeon in Glasgow and went on to ordination after two years at Blairs. He died at the age of thirty-two while ministering to cholera victims at Greenock. It would not be surprising if James Keenan Junior had the desire and the skill to paint Scalan, Aquhorties, Blairs and (as noted in the last issue) the Catholic church in Glengairn.

Ann Dean, Insh.

It should be possible to find out more about James Keenan (for example what he did for a living when not on the move with his paints and brushes) from Aberdeen sources.

Thank you for the recent arrival of *Scalan News*. You make a fine job of it each year, keeping us all well informed of the latest developments and news - a great service to all of us who love its history. I'm looking forward to John Watts' book. It should sell well. I hope schools will buy it too - the children need to know how much they (and we!) owe to these dedicated priests and seminarians, and to the people of the North East who supported them in keeping the Faith alive during those times.

Leslie Macfarlane, Aberdeen.

Dr Macfarlane (who once wrote an article on Scalan but is much better known for his definitive book on Bishop Elphinstone, the founder of King's College, Aberdeen) would no doubt agree that schools, having acquired a library copy of Scalan: the Forbidden College, 1716-1790, should also purchase class sets of John Watts' The Story of Scalan for Young People which came out in 1996. As well as knowledge, it provides the sort of learning activities when he, as a former headmaster, understands better than most authors.

I was very happy to receive my copy of *Scalan News*. It seems to be particularly interesting this year, and I must congratulate you on your good, clear print making it readable for me in spite of eye problems. I'm so glad the Association is going from strength to strength and the repair work continues. What changes since I first saw the place some 25 years ago!

I was moved by the account of Bishop Hay's last days. I first read the story of his conversion to Catholicism in a long article from the *Banffshire Journal* - how he worked as a surgeon's apprentice in Edinburgh and used his skills on the field of Prestonpans. Later he carried his black bag of medicines during pastoral visits in the north. He seems to have had a devotion to St Teresa of Avila so it was good that he died on her feast day. I must get hold of John Watts' book on Scalan and find out what there is about Bishop Hay.

Sadly I shall not be able to come to Scalan this year, being more or less house bound - old age has come rather suddenly and I am indeed sorry. Things may improve, God willing. I wish everybody a happy holy day on the Sunday, preferably dry. I shall always remember your rendering of 'Faith of our Fathers' on the pipes in former years.

Mary Harding, Forres.

Nobody could say the magazine was in LARGE PRINT format, so it's good to know that it can be read by eyes grown dim. A talking book

version was once produced and announced, but there were no takers.

Living as I do in Ulster, *Scalan News* helps to make me aware of very precious 'roots'. My father was John Stuart (died 1970) and his sister (my aunt) was Lena Stuart who died in 1996. I visited Scalan in August o~ that year and would love to come back again, but travelling there on my own is very difficult, with exorbitant ferry and air fares and the nearest Scotrail stations at Aviemore and Keith.

I share Veronica Gordon-Smith's views about the very strong tolerance which I have always experienced in Scotland, especially in the North East. Thank God that my father passed on to me that sensitivity, diplomacy and tact so necessary for a successful pluralist society. At times I find myself very much at odds with fellow Catholics in Northern Ireland who often strike the same chord as the composer James McMillan.

I would be very grateful if you could inform me if there are any 'Friends of Scalan' anywhere in Ireland, North or South. I feel that there is much that we could share, not least that rich strand of religious tolerance which I associate with Glenlivet and which, sadly, is rarely found in Northern Ireland.

John Stuart, Ballymena.

The fact that there are hardly any Irish members of the Scalan Association but many in England probably supports the point being made. You must know, however, of Corrymeela (outside Ballycastle in your own county) and its work of reconciliation - maybe a CorrymeelaScalan link would do some good.

Isobel Grant's further stories in *Scalan News*, following *Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet*, were much appreciated. You capture the magic of the 'seannachie' story teller in her: the art of storytelling is fast disappearing. Isobel must have had a fascinating childhood, and she describes it in such detail. I sent copies of the book to friends in East Anglia and in John O' Groats. They all loved it and found her recording of events absolutely delightful.

Canon Angus MacQueen, Barra.



More Tales of the Braes

Isobel Grant

The book continues to sell well, with the principal author drumming up business in London. 'I hear you have written a novel,' said a visitor from Los Angeles. 'It's not a novel, it's my childhood!' Isobel corrected him. More tales keep coming back to her mind.

Robert Emmett, who was one of a family boarded out with us at the Bochel, knew Mrs Robertson always took some pan drops to church. Her seat was just behind the Bochel one, so as soon as the sermon started Robbie began to cough. He didn't really have a cough, but he knew Mrs Robertson would give him a pan drop. Later Fr Murdoch who was at Chapelton during the war years got tired of the coughing which began whenever he went into the pulpit. He gave a sermon on it - said one cough was like thunder in the hills. Rita Matheson Lettoch had a smoker's cough and said 'I will go to Tombae instead,' but she never did - too far to walk.

Later when her brother Jim had a motor bike she went on the back, but rode side-saddle like the Queen used to do when she was young. Rita was always very well dressed so didn't want to spoil her rig out. My sister Meggie was on the back of Willie Robertson's motor bike one time, also side-saddle. Willie went fast, and Meggie fell off in the Woodie below Woodend. He never missed her until he said something and no answer came, so he had to turn back for her. She landed on the grass verge and wasn't hurt, but she

gave him a good telling off.



Mam sent Teddy Emmett round the rabbit snares before he went to school and he came back and said, 'No rabbits today.' Three weeks later he said there was one but it looked pitifully at him, newly caught, so he loosened the brass wire on its neck and it ran off so happy. Mam had to laugh. Teddy joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in the war, so did Fr Donald Grant's father - I expect they didn't want to shoot the enemy.

We had a visitors concert every summer in the school, and John McGrath went round all the houses asking people to perform. Irene Tocher who married him sang 'Christopher Robin is Saying His Prayers'. John and his sister Madge danced the Highland Fling. Lena and Agnes Stuart and Bunty and Nancy Kerr recited 'And the highway man came riding, riding, riding up to the old inn door.' Dr Elder, who was the doctor for the Braes and all Glenlivet, sang 'The burn was big with spate, and there came tumbling doon, tapsalteerie the half o' a gate and alum hat wanting a croon: Mrs Grant Auchorachan sang 'Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon'.

Jenny Kilbride was Celia and V a!' s youngest daughter, not Monica's as it said in the last issue. I was sorry I didn't think to send the book to Monica earlier, as it arrived the day after her funeral - she would have loved it. She was one of the six who walked to school from the Drovers, then they moved to Kerr's house opposite Springlea before going to Fort Augustus. Two more babies, Mary and Teresa, were born there, then a year at Lord Lovat's before going to Caldey Island. Can you imagine the stir when Charlie McHardy and his wife Mary the Shop came off the boat with eight children! Mary was sick on the boat even though it was only half an hour, and said 'I will never cross over again: She taught the children herself as there was no school in Caldey - of course they were eager to learn.

Monica was so like Henrietta or Rita, the last of the McHardys to live in the chapel at Scalan. We used to follow Rita at the cranberries, as she always knew the best parts for the berries. Now there are no berries as there are so many sheep and they eat off all the leaves. I used to like Ladderfoot hill. They were larger berries and some grew on grassy parts, not among the heather, so were easy to pick. Louie Anderson Milne, Rosemount, used to go there with me. Jessie Robb's sister Bell was in Corrunich then, so we called for tea on the way home although we'd had a picnic - you get very hungry on a lovely day with all the fresh air.

Nan Farquharson Wood end once took her six children to pick cranberries, along with Jessie and Willie Grant who came to stay there when their mother died in Glasgow. She marched them all up to the Clash, but took her bicycle so as to get home quickly to do her work. She gave the children plenty of food with them, but what I laughed about when I heard was that she gave them suitcases to hold the cranberries! They must have been small ones - it takes a long time even to fill a cup. When Nan cycled back up to march them all home Jessie said, 'I enjoyed my day on the hill.'



Returning to Readers Write, Canon MacQueen of Barra (and many other Highland stations) continues ill a different vein.

My fascination with Scalan, as a West Highland priest, is due to the fact that for a time we depended on the East Highlands.

Before the minor seminaries appeared in Morar and elsewhere, no crofter's or cottar's son could go for the priesthood. The few priests from the Islands were related to clan chiefs such as Clanranald. Things were easier in the East, where small landholders could afford to educate their sons. Another difference was that most churches in the East were endowed, but not a single church in the West carried any endowment. The 'whisky country' of Glenlivet was still Gaelic-speaking, however, and we owe the only Gaelic edition of the New Testament to Ewen MacEachan who served Braemar as a priest.

All that happened at Scalán kept the faith vibrant and healthy at a time when we in the West depended largely on catechists who travelled from village to village. Most famous of them was Ewen MacLachlan of Retland-Meoble, across Loch Morar, who did not make the priesthood due to a disability but stayed on in France to study French dance steps like the *pas de bas* and *pas de deux*. He came back to the Uists as a catechist, teaching both Christian doctrine and a new dance routine called the Hebridean dances - he invented several of these, like 'Flora MacDonald's Fancy' and 'Over the Water to Charlie'.

Views of Retland and Meoble make the heart dance, and history comes to life. An ongoing Bracara project is concerned with the MacDonalds of Retland who emigrated to Canada.

j'espere qu'en ces temps maussades à tous les points de vue, Morar a été une oasis de paix et de douceur de vivre, où seules les manifestations vocales des moutons lainifères de Madame Roberts auront pu, parfois, troubler votre quietude. Comme toujours j' ai pris grand plaisir - et une bonne leçon d' anglais - à la lecture du nouveau numéro des Scalán News, dont j' ai aussi goûté les illustrations pleines de saveur. Heureuse Ecosse 'papiste' dont j'admire la fidélité dans le souvenir et la présente vitalité! Cependant, si j' ai bien compris en lisant ce qui est dit de l' église de St Edward the Confessor à l'île de Canna, vous avez maintenant, comme nous, dans certains cas, un trop-plein d'édifices religieuses, dont la nouvelle affectation est parfois surprenante.

Maurice Caillet, Paris.

Toujours l'Europe! Monsieur Caillet some years ago enriched the pages of The Innes Review with an account of books from the Scots College Paris which found their way to the Irish College during the French Revolution, and he has kept up an interest in Scalán where boys developed the skills which enabled these to be read with profit.

I read the 'Historic Catholic Sites' brochure with great interest and may have some information to add. According to local Moidart tradition, St Fionn is buried at Kilfinnan on Loch Oich. That could be complicated by the presence of what I believe are two very old stones at Eilean Fhianan on Loch Shiel. One is a cross carved in local stone but with the arms and shaft rounded off as if by abrasion. The other is an upright stone which bears a strange symbol either a human figure or a cross on a symbolic square hill.

John Dye, Acharacle.

West Highland Priests

Stimulated by a first visit to Rome in 1999, a very prayerful yet highly convivial Morar and Mallaig pilgrimage (supported to great effect by musical people from Barra, Corran and beyond) your editor compiled *West Highland Priests of the Scots College Rome* in the format familiar to readers of this magazine. It was produced locally on thin paper and with some of the illustrations blurred, so it only costs £1.50 including postage. Brief accounts of fifty priests are given and the 7,500-word booklet ends, by way of an extract from the historical novel *A Cairn of Small Stones* by John Watts, with an invitation to join our Association.

Recently to hand is the much more substantial *Some Priests of Moidart* by Father Jerome Ireland. Fr Ireland (1914-74) was at Fort Augustus but left the Benedictines to become a secular priest, spending the last twelve years of his life at Mingarry in Moidart. In the house was an account of early priests put together by a nineteenth-century one called Ranald Rankin, and Fr Ireland produced a serial account by Gestetner on his weekly bulletins according to John Dye of Acharacle who has assembled the latest version, the quality was so variable that parts of it 'scanned' (by the process of optical character recognition) as Russian Cyrillic script!

John has put the booklet for sale in the Acharacle Post Office at £3.75. He has also sent copies to Morar, so that a SPECIAL OFFER can be made of the two booklets for £5.50 - cheques to AR at the address inside the back cover.

Pathways in Peril



More, this time from the National Trust for Scotland, on the theme of overused pathways.

Boots wear through thin vegetation, exposing soils and sub-soils to the erosive power of Scotland's high rainfall. Because eroded paths are not as comfortable to walk on, many walkers take to the path edges. In doing so they inadvertently begin a new process of erosion as the edges wear down to produce an ever expanding and intrusive scar on the landscape. To counter this erosion we at the National Trust stabilise slopes, shed water from paths, encourage walkers to stay on the renewed path surface, and regenerate bare, eroded ground. But it is expensive: a metre of repaired path costs £35 and a cross drain £250.

Groups from the St Michael Centre in Tomintoul could! at no cost whatsoever! tramp the Whisky Roadie from Sealan to the Well of the Lecht back into place.

On the Day that I was Born

Dr Norman W. Imlah

I was born on 1st March 1924 in a house called Birchbrae by the side of the Livet opposite Minmore House! the home of Captain William Smith Grant. A leading local landowner, he was a prominent member of the Catholic community and a regular attendee at Tombae Church. My father, who was from Edinville near Aberlour! came there in 1921 as stud groom (later he became grieve at the Home Farm) because Minmore had a very well known Clydesdale stud. My mother had been cook at Minmore House until they married in 1923.

On the day that I was born my father was sent by Captain Smith Grant to Ballindalloch Station with a horse to meet the new priest Father Alexander Bennett. He set out in the morning! and I was not born until late afternoon! but the tale was told many times as the day of my birth was one of the worst snow storms in living memory in Glenlivet and they had a few bad ones in those days! Ballindalloch is seven miles from Minmore! while Tombae is a couple of miles further into Glenlivet after the hamlet of Tomnavoulin.

My Father related how he and Fr Bennett battled through the storm with the snow lying deep around them! each taking turns to sit on the horse with the other holding on grimly to the tail so as not to get lost in the storm. Whenever they met in years to come they always recalled their journey that day.



My father was a very strong man who came through four years with the Gordons in France but even he felt it as a severe ordeal. After many hours they reached Tombae where father left the new priest and returned home to find that he had a son. He also heard all about the hazardous journey the local doctor had made! from less than a mile away! to attend the birth. Like Isobel Grant, therefore, I was born in 'blin' drift'.

The last Scalan News invoked personal recollections. Tom Stuart, whose death was reported! was a dashing young man about the area when I was a small boy! and I think that the Mary Stuart who signed as registrar on my birth certificate was his sister. I recall her well as the usual occupant of the little Glenlivet Post Office. My childhood crossed the whole range of the social structure. Two names brought this to mind from a first glance through Isobel's book: Delnabo, and the tramp Packy Sim.

The first Mrs Smith Grant (Helen) was my godmother, and my second name, William, was at her suggestion to my mother as, being a boy, I could not have her name. Delnabo was then a shooting-lodge owned or leased by the Smith Grants, and many a summer's day I was taken there by my childless godmother and paraded and indulged at afternoon tea on the lawn. She had an elegant beauty and I was very attached to her.

I knew the tramp Packy Sim, who visited us regularly. The description in *Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet* is accurate but does not mention that he travelled with a goat. I could tell a good story about Packy, the goat, and my father, but I will leave it until I have read all of the book carefully (there is a lot in it) as there may well be more that I can remember. It was quite a cosmopolitan existence, at any rate, with tramps one day and elegant fragrant ladies the next.

When father became grieve we moved from Birchbrae to Hill View beside the distillery, opposite Castleton, in a row of houses occupied by the distillery manager, the farm grieve, the exciseman, the chief clerk and the brewer - in other words, what would pass

today for top management but illustrates, for these days, the kind of hierarchies that existed within the community.

After a particularly successful year with the Clydesdales we left Glenlivet in 1934. My father managed an estate farm in Lanarkshire, mainly with sheep and a few Clydesdales, and moved to Yorkshire in 1944 to establish a herd of Aberdeen Angus from scratch. That Rowley herd became well known, and in the sixth year he topped the world record for an Aberdeen Angus bull at the Perth sales. He tried to breed back to the types he saw as a young man on the farms he worked on round Aberlour and Ballindalloch. He came north to these places buying heifers, and to the Braes of Glenlivet, but I don't know whether Proud Ferdinand of Rowley's mother came from the Braes.

The year before my father died I took him around his old haunts and friends for a holiday. We stayed in Tomintoul and visited various places, and he was still recalling the day he brought the new priest from Ballindalloch. I hope this is of interest, and may bring back memories for others who knew Glenlivet in these days. Some may have known the priest in question, as I think he remained for a number of years.

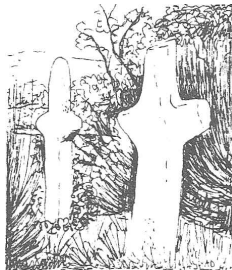
Who can supply Or Imlah with information about the Rev. Alexander Bennett beyond the bare facts of his career? Born Blairs 1884. Educated Blairs 1897/1902; Issy 1902-04; St Sulpice 1904-07. Ordained Blairs 1907. Aberdeen Cathedral 1907-08. Fochabers 1908-10. Professor, Blairs 1910-18. Oomie 1918/24. Tombae 1924-49. Fochabers 1949/60. Retired to Banchory 1960, and died there 30 Nov 1961.

Pilgrimage to the Green Isle

Ronald MacDonald

This was led by Canon John Angus MacDonald of Fort William on 10 September and included people from other congregations in Lochaber. The Green Isle of St Finan, Eilean Fhianan, is near the south-west end of Loch Shiel and we sailed down to it from Glenfinnan in the 'Sileas'. As pilgrims we felt no pain but only delight as the boat's owners gave us the benefit of their local knowledge - deserted Glenaladale was a particular feature on the starboard side.

As we approached the high little island (where up to ten thousand are said to have been buried since Finan made it his base) the roofless medieval chapel came into view. Once ashore, we made our way up through grave stones of all sorts.



Alistair MacLeod pointed out the one under which is buried the Corbet of Arisaig who held the Prince's banner at Glenfinnan in 1745, and the graves of Maighstir Alasdair MacDonald and the Rev. Charles MacDonald, author and priest of Moidart, were also inspected before Mass began within the chapel walls.

Most people had been to the Green Isle before (in that sense it is a genuine centre of pilgrimage for Lochaber) but for the benefit of first-timers Canon MacDonald explained the antiquity of the altar and the quadrangular bronze Celtic bell which is attached to it. On the one occasion when it was removed, by an English soldier making his way from Castle Tioram, the culprit was caught at the head of the loch, tied to a tree and given a thrashing. While people picnicked in the warm sunshine (our marvellous summer has been a well kept secret as far as the weather forecasters are concerned) a piper played laments for the dead and, with 'Lochaber No More', for the emigrants who left their dead behind.

Qualified Episcopal Chapel

Rev. Patrick Jones

What follows is taken from the latest issue of Aberdeen University journal Northern Scotland for the sake of its link with the widow of the last Catholic Duke of Cordon, who must be given credit for allowing Scalán to continue on her land. 'Qualified' chapels of the Episcopal Church of Scotland were accepted by the Hanoverian government, unlike those of the Jacobite non-jurors who refused the oath of allegiance. These were targeted after Culladon in the same way as Scalán.

By far the largest and most celebrated of the qualified chapels in the Northeast was St Paul's facing Loch Street in Aberdeen. It was

founded in 1720 by the remnants of the Episcopal congregation which had worshipped in the West Church of St Nicholas under Dr Andrew Burnet before he was driven out in the aftermath of the Fifteen. The chapel was completed in 1722. A new aisle was added in 1764, increasing the total seating to accommodate 1,000 worshippers. St Paul's was the fashionable city church, and it was not unusual for the Gallowgate to be lined with carriages waiting the dispersal of congregations.

At St Paul's, whose status may be likened to that of a modern cathedral, we find in the registers (among the names of hundreds of persons in ordinary occupations) those of landowning families in the county and beyond, wealthy city lawyers easing themselves into the ranks of the gentry, and men whose success in trade and industry brought massive benefits both to themselves and to the city and countryside. With these were also linked a number of figures of distinction in medicine and the arts.

At the apex of north-eastern society stood the Dukes of Gordon, represented after the death of her husband the 2nd Duke by the formidable figure of the dowager Duchess Henrietta, a noted agricultural improver in her own right. She overlooked an earlier undertaking to bring up her four sons as Roman Catholics and had them educated in the Protestant faith, in consideration of which she was awarded a state pension of £1,000 a year. The family afterwards preserved an ambivalent attitude to religion; though officially Episcopalian, their Banffshire castle guaranteed shelter from persecution for the surrounding Catholic community and its Bishop.

Henrietta had a permanent seat at St Paul's, emblazoned with the ducal armorial bearings. Her late husband had subscribed to the organ fund, and the 3rd Duke had his son baptised by the minister in 1743. This august patronage ensured that many lairds of the Gordon network would follow suit, and altogether nine of them appear from time to time in the baptism register. Others of the nobility and gentry similarly connected with the chapel were the 16th Lord Forbes, Burnett of Fasque, Cumine of Pitlurg, Irvine of Drum and Leith of Leithhall.

Wallakirk and the Gordons of Wardhouse and Spain

Ann Dean

From the 4th to the 6th of August this year, Huntly celebrated *Gordon 2000* three wonderfully happy, friendly days. Huntly was awash with Gordons, and for the Catholics of St Margaret's Church the most important of these were unquestionably the Gordons of Wardhouse. Seventeen members of that family returned 'home', and it must have been a very moving experience for them.

Some of the visitors stayed at Beldorney Castle, which was very fitting as the Wardhouse Gordons were originally of Beldorney, Wardhouse coming to them through the marriage of James Gordon 9th of Beldorney to Mary Gordon 3rd of Wardhouse. Their grandson, Alexander Gordon, succeeded to Wardhouse in 1760.

From the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s, members of the family regularly supported and attended the church in Huntly: from 1787 St John's in Meadow Street, and from 1834 St Margaret's. A small exhibition was mounted in St Margaret's Church Hall for *Cordon 2000* which showed clearly the contribution made by several generations of the family and the huge debt of gratitude the Catholics of Huntly owe to them.

The Gordons were involved in the wine trade in Spain, and Wardhouse became their summer home with most of the family returning to Spain for the winter months. Rafael Gordon 10th of Wardhouse and Count de Mirasol was responsible, while on a visit to the estate in 1913, for the restoration work at the enclosure in Wallakirk graveyard, just below Beldorney Castle, where members of his family are buried. To commemorate this he erected a plaque which reads:

Gordon of Wardhouse

Queen of Heaven and Mother of God, remember that we belong to thee.

Preserve us and defend us as Thy property and possession.

Restored by Rafael Gordon of Wardhouse, 1913.

In 1933 Rafael Gordon died while at Nairn, at the home of his aunt, and was buried at Wallakirk. No tombstone was erected in his memory, and it is fitting that, when the Spanish Gordons visited Wallakirk, they were determined that at last Rafael Gordon, the present Count de Mirasol's grandfather, will be properly honoured. They plan to return in August 2001 for this event.



Within the Gordon enclosure there was buried in 1759 Thomas Brockie, priest of the Cabrach Mission, and his tomb with a lengthy inscription in Latin has almost disappeared beneath the turf. As his mission covered Aberlour, the Cabrach, Glass and Mortlach (Huntly), he would have been well known to the Gordons of Beldorney. His place was filled by John Geddes (later Bishop Geddes) and it is perhaps at Beldorney that the friendship with Arthur Gordon, son of James and Mary Gordon and the first to go to Spain, began - and which continued throughout the years when John Geddes was Principal at Valladolid and Arthur Gordon established the wine business at Xerez de la Frontera.

A highlight of Gordon 2000 for many, including the Spanish visitors, was an organ recital given in St Margaret's Church by Judith Fellowes-Gordon. Restored to its gilded beauty during the incumbency of the late Canon Lewis McWilliam, the interior caused one Huntly matron to observe to her neighbour that this was 'a bonny kirk'! The printed programme included an account of the church, based on Ann Dean's recent research, which shows that the traditional account of the origins of the wall-paintings and the altarpiece is mistaken. She was also responsible for the very well presented exhibition in the hall which added to the enjoyment of all who mingled over refreshments.

Historic Kirkyards

Dr Ian Shepherd, who is responsible for archaeology to Aberdeenshire Council and receives *Scalan News*, sent a splendidly illustrated brochure with details of 126 historic kirkyards. Due to the peculiar nature of modern Aberdeenshire (it includes the old county of Kincardine and the town of Banff, though Banffshire is mostly in Moray) Wallakirk does not feature. Nor do other old graveyards with Catholic connections, like the Buiternach in Glenlivet and St Ninian's in the Enzie, but the old Glenmuick burying place near Ballater is there with its stone (rescued by Bishop Conti) commemorating the Rev. Lachlan McIntosh who was 64 years in Clengairn. Unfortunately the site which includes the last resting place of Bishop George Hay, St Ninian's at Fetternear, does not come under the control of the local authority.



Reviews of John Watts' *Scalan*

'Published to mark the 200th anniversary of Scalan's closure in 1799 ... this extensively researched but very read-able account sheds light on a remarkable period of our history which has... been ignored by many for too long. Above all, this book will provide the reader with a deeper appreciation of the gift of faith and the struggle endured by our forebears to pass it on.'

Flourish

'The textual content itself is unusually broad-based for a historian such that the reader emerges at the end enlightened *inter alia* in the matters of education and church tensions, as well as domestic and agricultural conditions, including the famine years of the '70s and '80s. It is well illustrated by maps and photographs and, incidentally, provides a useful introduction to late eighteenth century thoughts on the concept of rights and the use of law and freedom of conscience ...'

John S. Smith, *Northern Scotland*

'This book reads like a Stevensonian adventure brought to life by the personalities ... It is inspirational, written with piety and wonder at the courage and forbearance of both staff and students when the college was under attack. ... Although easily read it is written from first sources. It is an invaluable reference book. The notes at the end of each chapter not only add to the text but pinpoint sources for writers and students ...'

Scottish Catholic Observer

The following extract from near the beginning of Scalán: The Forbidden College, 1716-1799 (Tuckwell Press, East Linton, £14.99) is illustrated by the back cover map.

Off the Beaten Track

John Watts

In 1716 the district was barely accessible ... In the whole upper part of the County of Banff there was but one stone bridge, built in the sixteenth century to give access to Blairfindy Castle, which crossed the Livet about a mile above its confluence with the A van. Half a century of legislation promoting road building and repair had in fact produced no visible results whatever in Banffshire by the date that Scalán opened. Only after the Act of 1718 would a start be made, and not for several decades thereafter would anything be done in the uplands of the county.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Scalán itself there were four recognised routes in and out. One led south over the hill to the Conglas Water, and from there west to Strathavon, Abernethy and Speyside. A second climbed up over the Ladder, branching either into Glen Nocht or Glen Buchat, and thence on and into Strathdon and the east. A third led north-eastwards up past the Suie, over to the Blackwater and so down into Strathbogie. The last took the traveller down the Braes, to join the two bridle paths that crossed Lower Glenlivet and linked with the route to Glen Rinnes. The fourth kept to low ground, but again no sudden approach was possible on it, because it crossed the great open Moss of the Carrachs, known also as the *Feithe Bhadach* - the Vatieh Moss - less than a mile from the house.

Remote, hard to find and harder to reach, the Scalán was indeed as one author has aptly expressed it, 'a retreat, and about as non-apparent to the busy world as was compatible with real existence'. And this, in the year after the '15, was of course precisely its recommendation.

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