

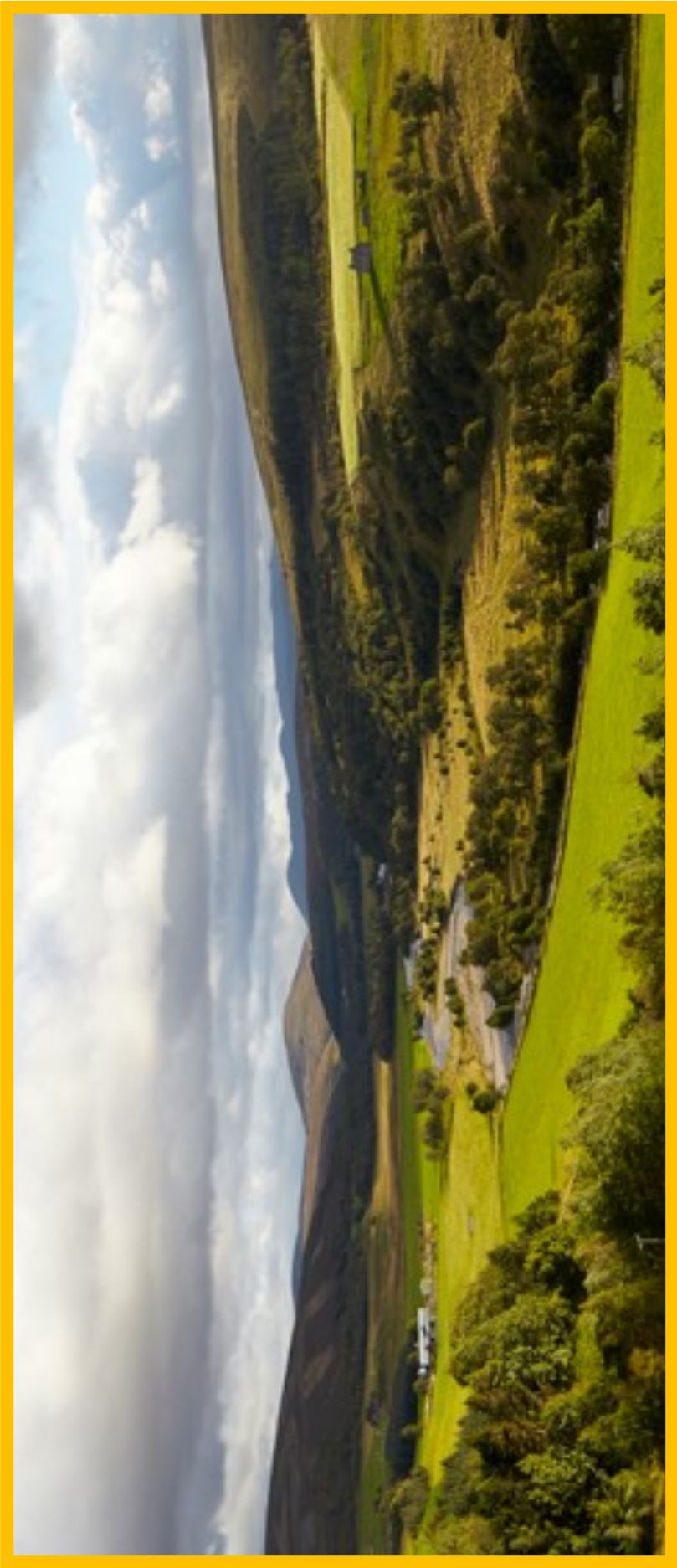
Scalan News

Official Voice of the Scalan Association (SC022814)
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“The time by the goodness of God will come, when the Catholic religion will again flourish in Scotland; and then, when posterity shall enquire, with a laudable curiosity, by what means any sparks of the true faith were preserved in these dismal times of darkness and error, Scalan and the other colleges will be mentioned with veneration, and all that can be recorded concerning them will be recorded with care...”

(The above comes from an address given by John Geddes to his students in the Royal Scots College, Valladolid, Spain, on 18 June. 1777, at a meeting of the community known as “The Academy”. He was the saviour of Scalan as its rector, 1762-67, built the house we can visit today, and established it as a centre of excellence in piety, learning and even agriculture. In 1770 he was sent to Spain to rescue the Scotch College, Madrid. He re-established it in the northern city of Valladolid where it flourished for over 200 years before it re-located to Salamanca in 1988. There are many priests in Scotland today who are “Spaniards”, as they are known, former students of the Royal Scots College, Spain.)



View of Strathavon from the Gaffney Cairn

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Points of Interest

1. Scalan Seminary and Sandy's Cottage have remained in good order this winter. There have been very few visitors possibly because of the state of the track and the continual high winds and rain. Wellington boots were the only sensible foot wear. The second week of March has seen a weather change, sun, little wind and no rain. The peewees have arrived in the fields and the frogs in the Eskemullach mill pond.
2. Once again we have been promised that the track will be upgraded shortly.
3. New interior and external doors have been made for the toilets and will be in place by May.
4. The gale force winds blew down one of the old sycamores on the boundary. Fortunately it missed Sandy's cottage. The wood went to the tree-feller and the brush

wood to the Brae's bonfire on the 5th November.

5. Mountain biking is growing in popularity and the Crown Estate's new track is up and running and drawing visitors to the area.

6. The three year old pond project by the new car park is worth visiting; so far ducks and frogs have been seen in the water and roe deer in the surrounding area.

7. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) planned to visit Scalan on the 17th March to measure and photograph Scalan and other listed buildings.

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Victor Gaffney and Edward Peck.

Dr Victor Gaffney (1910-1974) was the son of Michael Gaffney, from Ireland and Rachael Grant from Tomintoul; his grandparents came from the Braes of Glenlivet. He had a great love for Strathavon and Glenlivet, spending every possible holiday there. He taught for many years at Holy Cross Academy, Edinburgh, becoming headmaster of the primary department. In 1959 he was awarded a doctorate for his thesis on the Lordship of Strathavon which was published in 1960 under the title *The Lordship of Strathavon: Tomintoul under the Gordons*. In 1970 he wrote *Tomintoul: its Glens and its People*, a condensed treatment of the main book. He died before the Bicentenary celebrations in Tomintoul; in 1976 a cairn was erected in his memory by the people of Tomintoul; this stands on the old military road at Camdelmore overlooking the whole range of Ben Avon.

Sir Edward Peck (1915-2009) was a mountaineer and a diplomat. He completed his career by being the UK's representative to NATO between 1970 and 1975. After retiring he and his wife settled in a former forestry cottage at Torrains above the River Avon about a mile from Tomintoul; they called the house 'Torrains'. They travelled and explored in the Alps, Turkey and the Himalayas and, of course, throughout Strathavon and Glenlivet. In 1983 he published *Avonside Explored: A guide to Tomintoul and Glenlivet* and in the introduction he wrote that the guide was a tribute to Dr Victor Gaffney. Edward Peck's work expands Victor Gaffney's *Tomintoul, its Glens and its People* by including more of Inveravon and Glenlivet, and by providing directions for walks and drives when exploring the Avon and its tributaries.

His grandson, Robert Macfarlane, in his book, *The Old Ways*, described his crossing of the Cairngorms to attend the funeral of his grandfather at Tomintoul; he started from Blair Atholl, through the Lairig Ghru and finally through the forest of Rothiemurchus. He wrote 'It was the influence of my grandfather and my parents which had drawn me to mountains as a child: it was my grandfather who had helped high coun-

try and wild places to cast their strong spells over me’.

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Tomintoul and Strathavon

In *Scalan News* much is written about the Braes of Glenlivet and Scalan and its history. But what about Tomintoul, so near now by car from Scalan, but not so far away by walking tracks in the 1700s? Tomintoul, in the neighbouring parish of Kirkmichael, and the whole area described as Strathavon have an interesting history which is not often mentioned in *Scalan News*, but see *The Old Tongue in Tomintoul*, ScN 11, 1985.

Glenlivet and the Braes are the most southern parts of the parish of Inveravon whereas Strathavon is the descriptive name for the neighbouring parish of Kirkmichael. The river Avon rises in the very mountainous south west of Upper Strathavon and flows north for 30 miles through Lower Strathavon before entering the parish of Inveravon. At Tomintoul the Avon is on the 1000ft contour and at the border with Inveravon still above 700 ft. There has always been a scarcity of agricultural land; this and the severe weather conditions meant that over the centuries it was cattle country, not arable land - the land of summer shealings. The farms of Lower Strathavon each had their own shealing, and their cattle spent the summers there fattening on good hill grass.

Until 1727 Glenlivet and Strathavon were treated as one Catholic mission but after this Strathavon became a separate mission. Between 1727 and 1765 there were two Irish priests and three Benedictine priests from Ratisbon among those who served Strathavon. The Catholic families of Gordons, Grants and Farquharsons would have given priests shelter and until the failed Jacobite Rising, a certain amount of protection. It was essential that all priests were Gaelic speakers. The Braes and Glenlivet generally lost the Gaelic tongue by the early 1800s but in Strathavon, particularly Upper Strathavon, Gaelic was largely spoken until mid century.

After the failure of the Rising, there were reprisals. Scalan was burned as well as chapels in the Enzie and Strathbogie but there is no mention of the destruction of any chapel in Strathavon, which would suggest that there was no chapel or meeting place at that time. Cattle reivers, ‘traffiquing priests, and other rebels’ were all considered a threat to the country and severe measures were put in place to hunt them out. There had always been a track from Strathdon through the Lecht to Tomintoul, mainly used by the Highlanders to drive their stolen Lowland cattle quickly away into the Highlands and this track by 1753 became part of one of the new military roads, eventually linking Coupar Angus to Fort George by 1757. At the Lecht it passed just two

miles from Scalan, then to the 'clachan' at Tomintoul, on to Camdelmore, down to Urlamore and across the Avon. Soldiers were stationed at Corgarff, Achnahyle (Upper Strathavon), and Tomintoul with detachments in several strategic points in Glenlivet. When the country became more settled, the military presence was withdrawn to Corgarff.

During the 1760s the Duke of Gordon tried introducing flax growing and the spinning of linen thread on his Strathavon estates; for many reasons, perhaps mainly the area's remoteness, this project failed. So the Duke turned to ideas 'to develop this bleak and barren moor'. By 1775 he had plans drawn up for a village at Tomintoul to replace the one or two cottar houses and inn. On the 1775 plan of the village there is marked between the village and the moor at Balavlair a 'Popish Meeting House', near the junction of the modern Lecht and Dufftown road, possibly adjacent to, or on, the priest's croft of Findron, where he lived.

To begin with the village developed slowly; in 1794 there were 37 families but by 1842 143 families. By then many had to leave as there were no resources for maintaining such a large population. It was during these years that illegal whisky distilling and smuggling became the mainstay of many families. Seasonal harvest work in Angus and The Mearns was very important. The men were nicknamed 'thravers' (a thrave of 24 sheaves for which they were paid).

A kirk was built in Tomintoul which replaced Kirkmichael as the centre of the parish. The first Catholic church in the village was erected in 1783 by the priest Donald Stuart and it was replaced, on the same spot between 1837-39 by the priest Donald Carmichael - the present St Michael's Church. He tried in 1825, but failed, to get a piece of land next to his croft at Nether Cults on which to build a school. This project was shelved until 1860 and achieved by the priest Henry Gall. The rest is well known: the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy, the building of their convent and their role as teachers. When they left, the convent became St Michael's Centre, but the development of the Centre and its importance not only in the diocese but in Scotland and beyond, to Catholics and non-Catholics alike, is another story for another time.

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Buckie Builder at Bracara

In my *Chapels of the Rough Bounds: Morar, Knoydart, Arisaig, Moidart*, the most interesting section concerns the building which was raised at Bracara beside Loch Morar. Thomas Fraser Lord Lovat, who had estates on both sides of the Highlands, contributed £100. Bishop Andrew Scott, semi-retired from Glasgow to Greenock, explained the

project to another donor on 13 February 1835: 'This ensuing Spring we must begin to build chapels in six different Missions in the Highlands, viz. Glencoe, Badenoch, Glengarry, Knoydart, Morar and Island of Eigg. In every one of these missions the walls had been built with dry stone, thatched with turf and heath. Part of the walls have fallen down and nearly half of the roofs are blowing away.'

Supervision at Bracara fell to the Rev. Coll MacColl, there to support the old priest Ranald MacDonell. Bishop Scott observed that Coll was 'extremely well liked by the people', and the clergyman on the spot certainly played a key role. Scott's other representative in Morar was the builder William Gray, his brother-in-law. As noted (ScN 25) Scott and Bishop John Murdoch, who had taken over in Glasgow, came from the neighbouring Chapelford and Landends in the Enzie Catholic heartland. Another Glasgow bishop of the next generation, John Gray, came from Buckie on the Banffshire coast and William Gray was his father. When the builder went to Morar young John was at Blairs College, already literate in Latin as well as English.

Gray arrived with assistants in June 1835 and set about shaping the stones which had been gathered – with difficulty for want of local experience and tools. Lacking mortar, the walls raised were dry: pointing came later. In a January letter from 'Brackra Chapel' William Gray listed material to hand, mainly surplus timber, some of it 'sarking deal' for securing slates. Also itemised were 'scleat nails'. Gray went on to describe his plaster work on the inner walls and challenging conditions out doors:

'I was up the loch last saterdag in purpes to quarry some more flag ther was another boat from this place and angus an me stoped with mr macol's boat until monday as the boat that went with us on saterdag was to come back on monday and another one with his but the wind was very rough they could not come angus and me came away from the place about mid day by foot as it became very tempestuous with wind and rain I might have had them all here I depended on mr macol getting some boats I do not think I will be idel I shurly will get a cam day before I be out.'

Gray was limited to the hours of daylight: 'I would have been further on if I could have got any candel there was none to be got in arasaig or any other way here about I would rather wrought than ben siting in a dark hous.' In another letter Gray commented on the high cost of bringing lead by cart. Most material was landed at a pier in Arisaig and transferred by local boats to the Morar estuary: After being manhandled past the Falls on Britain's shortest river it was taken to 'the place of boating it to Bracara.' As MacColl pointed out, 'What could be looked for but heavy expenditure in so difficult a place as Loch Morar?' Bishop Scott had been there when lime was taken in hand by local men: 'I remember your Lordship was pleased at the exertions they made, it being a heavy and dangerous work they had of it & by which some of

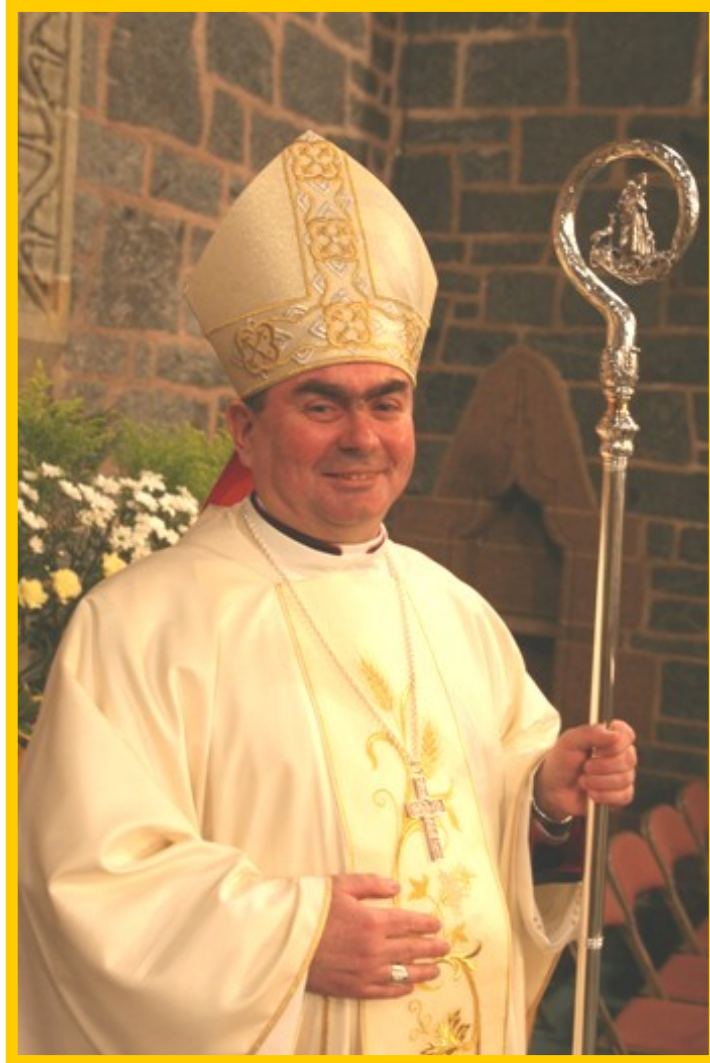
them suffered very much in their skins in carrying the Lime’.

The commanding site was marred by a hillock between chapel and loch. Faith is said to move mountains, but this mound called for manual labour. Coll MacColl: ‘it was not an easy matter, however the people wrought heartily at it, having collected Barrows etc.’ Gray told Scott: ‘it was some difficult to get them to do it right but the place looks very well now.’ He went on: ‘I have likeways pointed the west end of the chapel and portch and chemney neks and squew.’ The skew or corner-stone above the gable would have had biblical connotations for a bishop. Scott told his deputy in the Outer Hebrides: ‘We have got a very neat chapel and dwelling house nearly finished in North Morar, the place the most difficult of all other to get materials to.’

William Gray’s next challenge was to improve the forty-year old chapel in Fort William and build a new one at Ballachulish for the Glencoe mission. He had a difficult journey hampered by a sore leg: ‘I left north morar on the 22nd march I could not get the tools to arasaig by the salt watter owing to the stormy weather I was oblidge to get them carried over to Cross and got a cart to Arasaig.’ Cross farm was a long Scots mile from the Morar bridge. Stormy weather forced Gray to spend a night at the Glenfinnan inn, adding to the expenses which he claimed.

In his letter of 5 April he discovers capital letters and punctuation, no doubt with help from the Fort William priest. Among the sums listed was a guinea from the ‘Rev. Mr Mackenzie advance to joiners.’ £55 which Scott had handed over at Bracara covered other men’s wages. The builder claimed £22-3s for his own pay and expenses which included £3 sent to his wife. Bishop James Kyle at Preshome provided financial support for Mrs Gray and her three other children, as Scott acknowledged: ‘To be paid by me to you for my Sister and her husband, £20.’ After Fort William Gray wrote from Buckie on 30 April 1836. Having been 42 weeks away, he was not looking forward to Ballachulish: ‘I intended often to remove to Dundee...if I had done before now it had ben much better for us and the fimaly...my wife is in very low spirits.’ Three years later Scott was saying the Gray family should move to Aberdeen for work.

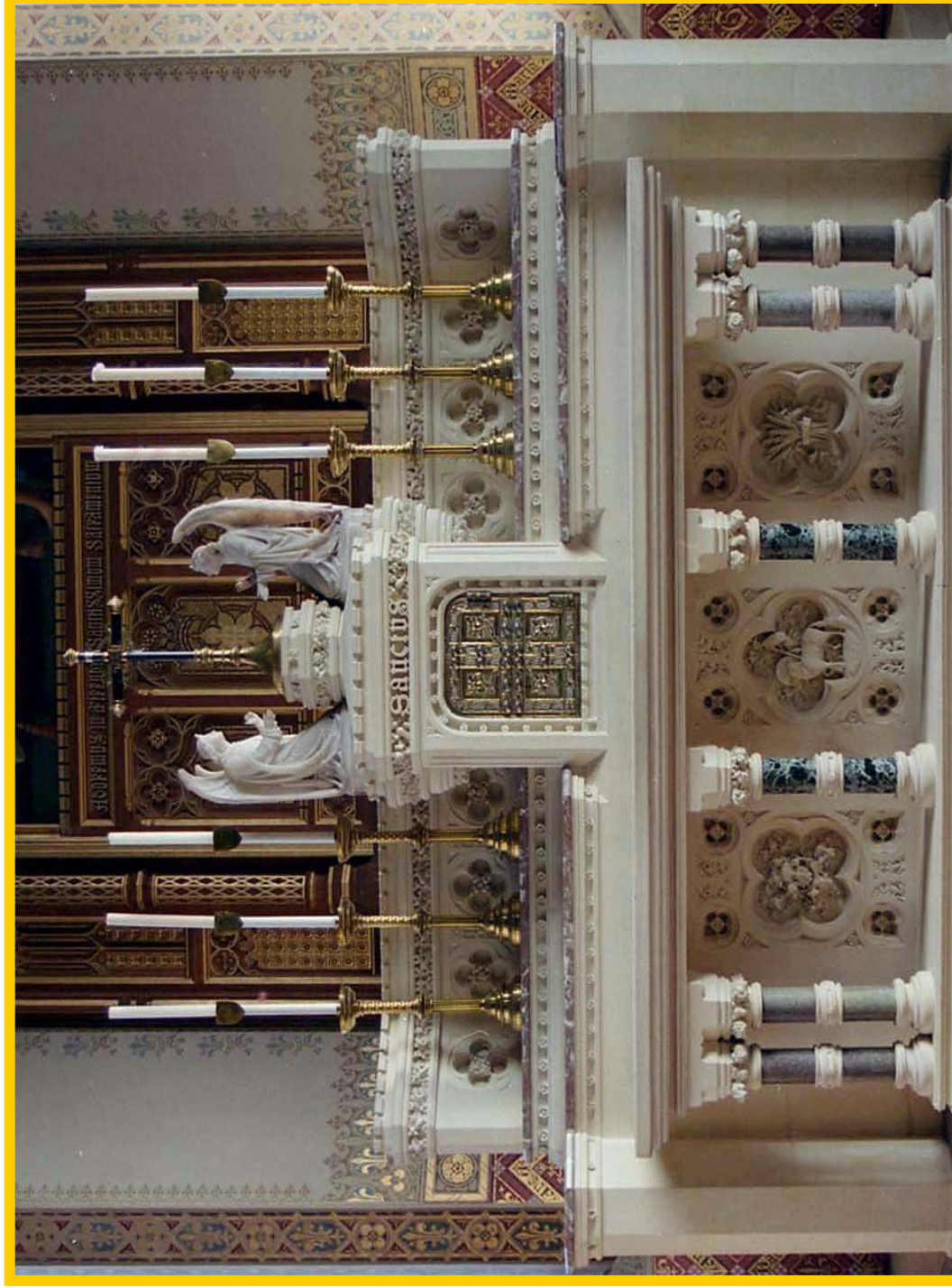
To end on a brighter note, a letter on 10 July 1838 gives Coll MacColl’s seal of approval to what William Gray had achieved in difficult circumstances: ‘Such weather as we have had since Friday last we have seldom seen the like with continuous rain...the whole of the flat part of the country from Arisaig to Lochmorar I may say is one Lake, and today Tuesday the rain continues with very little abatement...I am happy however to say that the windows of the Chapel & House resist the rain surprisingly, & that very little water is taken in by them. Few in these countries are occupying a



The Scalan Association records its pleasure at the appointment of Bishop Joseph Toal as the new Bishop of Motherwell. Bishop Toal has been a member of the Scalan Association since the 1980s when membership was restricted to priests and, as its secretary, he was instrumental in opening it up to all. A particular venture he encouraged is the Annual Pilgrimage Mass on the first Sunday in July which has now been celebrated for 25 years, and which we now take for granted as an indispensable annual occasion. Nor is he a stranger to that event, as well as several family members.

Bishop Toal was brought up in Roy Bridge in Lochaber, a name which, for Scots Catholics, stands besides the likes of Scalan, as equally honourable in the story of courage and loyalty in holding onto the “Old Faith” in times of persecution, difficulty and harassment.

We wish Bishop Toal every grace and blessing for his new task as a leader in the Church today in very challenging times. We also have confidence that he will still join us for the Annual Mass as often as his new duties allow



St. Gregory's, Preshome: the High Altar, with the tabernacle gifted by Fr. John Kyle.



St. Gregory's, Preshome: tiles on the sanctuary floor



St. Gregory's, Preshome: stencilled decoration on the sanctuary walls.

house freer of rain, and I may say smoke if attention be paid to cleaning the chimney.'

'Chapels of the Rough Bounds: Morar, Knoydart, Arisaig, Moidart' is available from Mallaig Heritage Centre at curator@mallaigheritage.org.uk or from Alasdair Roberts at alasdair_bracara@hotmail.com

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Scalan Books Again

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Anthony Ross, *Book Hunting in the Highlands*, Claves Regni 19, St Peter's College, Cardross, 1949

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Peter A Moran, *The Library of the Scots College Douai*, Innes Review 43 (1) 1992

The article in the eighth edition of *Scalan News* (ScN 8) by T. C. Barry described how sacksful of old books had arrived at his father's warehouse in Dundee for pulping during the War. After looking through them, it was realised that these were connected with Scalan. Bishop Maguire coadjutor Bishop to Dunkeld was called in and he went away with 'about two large sacksful' and their subsequent whereabouts have not been traced.

ScN 7 gave an extract from *Book Hunting in the Highlands* by Father Anthony Ross, O.P. He visited Chapelton in 1949; he had heard of the books which had been pulped, many of them inscribed with the name 'Scalan' and he realised the urgency of searching in the Highlands before all was lost. Mgr Sandy MacWilliam, parish priest at Chapelton from 1945 to 1947 may have told him about the books.

What happened to the library at Scalan when the college moved in 1799 to Aquhorthies? A selection was made, probably the older and seldom used ones left behind and the rest moved to Aquhorthies and this library moved on to Blairs in 1829. At Blairs the collection was enlarged by books from the closed colleges of Douai and Paris and from the Highland college on the island of Lismore. The Blairs Library containing 27000 volumes was then placed on long term deposit in the National Li-

brary of Scotland.

Father Ross in 1949 selected the ‘cream’ of the Chapeltown books which, once cleaned, were returned to the bishop of Aberdeen. Some of these are in the Aberdeen University Library Special Collections from where 26 were given to Pluscarden. In ScN 30 Paul Kinnear described how he and a friend in 1958 visited Scalan and Chapeltown – they spent Saturday evening with Father McCabe and the night in their sleeping bags in the attic which was still ‘full of old books’. These, he wrote, were later moved to Blairs College and then to the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh.

How did the discarded books from the Scalan library survive? It is thought that they were divided haphazardly into two lots, one lot for Tombae and the other for Chapeltown. Father James Sharpe remained at Scalan until 1807; he may have organised this division and the delivery for Tombae where there was a resident priest and a chapel, though not the Tombae church which was built in 1829. At Chapeltown there was neither a priest (Abbe Paul Macpherson arriving in 1827) nor a chapel. Where the Chapeltown lot of Scalan books was stored and how they survived is a mystery.

At Chapeltown there were 550 volumes, the large majority of them published before 1720, over half of them published in France or the Low Countries, 224 written in Latin, 165 in French, the others in English and Italian. They were transported to St Andrews University Library for cleaning, restoration and cataloguing. According to Paul Kinnear (see above) they are now in the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh but as there have been recent radical changes there, this may no longer be the case.

The history of the Tombae collection of Scalan books is a sorry and even more confused one. Bishop Maguire saved ‘two sacksful’ from being pulped – see his article *Scalan in Extremis* in *Claves Regni*, December 1942. Mgr MacWilliam visited Tombae in 1946 where part of the Scalan collection was still in a loft above the church. According to the then parish priest, these were being used by his boiler man, to help light the boiler. In 1949 Father Ross still found some sacks of old books there.

Much of Chapeltown library has been saved, but very little from Tombae. Hopefully books originating at Scalan may still come to light and be cared for and appreciated.

Archbishop Conti has added more information: he obtained a grant from the British Library which made possible the cleaning and restoration of the Chapeltown books; Blairs Library, at present on long term deposit in the National Library of Scotland will move ‘shortly’ to Aberdeen University Library Special Collections.

A spokesperson from Scottish Catholic Archives says that the books are presently at Bishop's House, Aberdeen.

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The Tombae Road by Alexander Grant

The bonniest road in Glenlivet
Is the road that strikes aff at the brig
An' gangs up bye Tombae tae Auchdregnie
Wi' its fields sae weel cared for an' trig.

I ken ilka fit o' its windings
I've traivelled it baith up an' doon
An' I'd rather hae it for a highway
Than a' the braid streets o' the toon.

The murmur o' Livet's ain water
Comes tae ye at ilka fresh turn
An' its sang gi'es an extra bit chorus
As doon frae the hill comes a burn.

The bonnie birk trees at the Claggan
Cling heich on the froonin' hillside
An' aneath a green drapery o' airn
The waters sae peacefully glide.

We micht sit for a meenit an' ponder
On the brig as we cross Alt-na-bae
An' think on a' them that are restin'
In the little kirk yaird at Tombae.

But we winna look doon an' feel waesome
The hills lift oor een tae the sky
The creator meant them tae be signposts
Frae the earth tae his heaven on high.

Wi' oor staff in oor han' we'll be trampin'
An' we sune get a glimpse o' Croftbain
An' the auld road gyan oot bye Delhandy
Tae see't as it aince wis we're fain.

The hooses are noo a' deserted
An' only the lone rowan trees
Brak the silence that broods owre the hillocks
As their boughs shak and wave in the breeze.

An' there's the grim bulk o' the Bochel
Wi' its feet in the Crombie below,
An' along aneath Cairn Muldonich
Oor road ever onwards does go.

Juist stop here an' look at the picter
If ye're nae owre ta'en up wi yersel,
An' I'm sure, gin ye dinna lack gumption
That the scene'll throw ower ye a spell.

The road like a ribbon gyangs twinin'
The trees bendin' owre it the while
An' the hills in their grandeur gie shelter
Tae the green fields o' fair Kynakyle.

Awa' in the distance the Ladder
Its purple clad glory does raise
An' laid oot like a map in its shadow
Are the fields an' the muirs o' the Braes.

Are ye tired an' forfochen wi' tyavin'?
Is yer back gey an' sair wi' yer load?
If for peace an' contentment yer strivin'
Ye can find them on this bonny road.

Alexander Grant, (1893-1975) poet of Tomnavoulin, was the eldest son of George and Elsie Grant of Milton Cottages, Tomnavoulin. He was educated at the village school and then in Glenlivet, a four-mile walk over the Gallowhill Road. When he left school, he found work at Aberlour Post Office, but at the outbreak of war he enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders and by the age of 22, in 1916 was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery on the Somme. When he returned to Aberlour at the end of the war, he could not settle and re-enlisted in the Royal Engineers and served in the Indian Army. He was invalided home in 1936, but still worked for the Army, latterly in the Pay Services at Edinburgh and remained there as Chief Clerk until his retirement in 1962. In 1963 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire, M.B.E., for

his 51 years service to the Crown.

Alexander Grant's poem about Scalan appeared in ScN 25. He also wrote *The Tombae Road*, a poem I am sure Mgr Copland knew and would have shared its sentiment. Each year in the spring Mgr Copland made his 'little pilgrimage' up to the end of the Tombae Road to admire the glorious spectacle of the pinks (primroses) in bloom.

This poem was published in *Tomnavoulin Glenlivet: A Collection of Poems by Local Writers* compiled by Hetty Milne, 2002. She gladly gave her permission for it to appear in the *Scalan News*.

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The Chapel of the Craggs and St Gregory's, Preshome

Is there a record of when and by whom the Chapel of the Craggs was built? It is often referred to as St Margaret of the Craggs. Bishop Nicolson lived in a cottage given to him by the Duke of Gordon in a secluded part of his estates at Preshome. There was no chapel there and the nearest, used by the Catholics of the Enzie, was the old St Ninian's, built by the Gordon family in 1687 on the site of a pre-Reformation one. This was used openly until trouble with Presbyterians in 1725 and not used after that, except for the funeral of the Duke in 1728. After that it was allowed to fall into ruin and this may have been when two small chapels (barns) were erected, the one a quarter mile east of the cottage at Preshome and the other a barn on the land of the laird of Tynet, near the present Chapel of St Ninian. The Chapel of the Craggs was used until it was gutted by soldiers in 1746 and the same treatment was given to the barn at Tynet. In 1753 on the Feast of St Peter, Mass was celebrated at the Chapel of the Craggs; it caused a stir but there was no retaliation. But in October the Sheriff of Banff urged by the Presbytery of Fordyce, closed up the doors 'by hinging locks on the door checks, for it had no doors, and muring up the entries'. The barn at Tynet was dealt with in the same way and it was at this point that the 'sheep-cote' at Tynet became the chapel, which, enlarged became the St Ninian's Chapel we know today. In 1764 Bishop Hay considered making the Chapel of the Craggs usable again, so from 1765 until 1790 it was the main place of worship for the Catholics of the Rathven area of the Enzie until the opening of St Gregory's Preshome.

In ScN 37, 2008, St Gregory's, Preshome and its history were well documented but two further points can be added. Bishop Kyle, at Preshome from 1829 to 1869, was buried in the vault in the sanctuary and his nephew John Kyle served at Preshome from 1858 to 1917; their brass memorial plaques are positioned on the walls near the sanctuary, one of which is illustrated in this issue – 88 years service from one family.

From 1790 until 1870, there were, according to J.F.S. Gordon's account in *The Catholic Church in Scotland* (1874) 'many alterations both inside and out' to the fabric of the church at Preshome. Well after his day, in 1896 the sanctuary was enlarged and the interior decoration and style completely changed by Peter Paul Pugin, son of Augustus Pugin. There appears to be NO painting or photograph of the interior of the church BEFORE this transformation; this is hard to believe. If St Margaret's, Huntly, insignificant compared with the grandeur of Preshome, possesses a pre-1905 photograph of the church interior in all its plain-ness, surely somewhere there exists a record of Preshome prior to 1896.

Sandy Webster, who is compiling a historical and pictorial account of Preshome and has recorded meticulously the post 1896 interior, would like to find this elusive photo, drawing or painting of pre-1896 Preshome to complete his study.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of a pre-1896 Preshome chapel interior illustration, please get in touch with Sandy Webster at romsdal@tiscali.co.uk

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Coming soon...

Fr. Michael Briody, our secretary/treasurer, is in the process of bringing to publication a transcription of a document (of 69,000 words) written by John Geddes in 1781 describing the period from 1770 when he was sent out to Spain to recover the Scotch College, Madrid. It had been founded in 1627. Colonel William Semple, a Scots Catholic from Lochwinnoch, had been a mercenary in the armies of the King of Spain in the Low Countries which, at that time, were colonized by Spain. At a point when it came to pay him, Spain was bankrupt and, instead of money, he was given property in Jacomotrezo Street in Madrid. In time, his wife, Doña María de Ledesma, suggested it could be turned into a seminary since these were forbidden in Scotland and we looked to Catholic-friendly countries on the continent of Europe for secure places to establish them. They entrusted the direction of the seminary to the Jesuit Order. In 1767 the Jesuits were expelled from Spain, and John Geddes' document details how he recovered the property and transferred the college to Valladolid, where there already existed an English College since 1589. In fact, his greatest helper in this endeavour was the rector of that college, Dr. Philip Perry, who accompanied him every step of what turned out to be a torturous bureaucratic process from April 1770 until March 1771. The document shows how he spent much of the next ten years establishing the college firmly within Spanish Civil Law.

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St. Gregory's,
Preshome:
Interior



Tomintoul



St. Gregory's, Preshome: plaque commemorating Bishop Kyle's nephew, John, who was priest at Preshome from 1858 to 1917. A similar one, on the opposite side of the sanctuary commemorates Bishop Kyle.