

Inventory



**news**

No. 2, June 1991

'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)

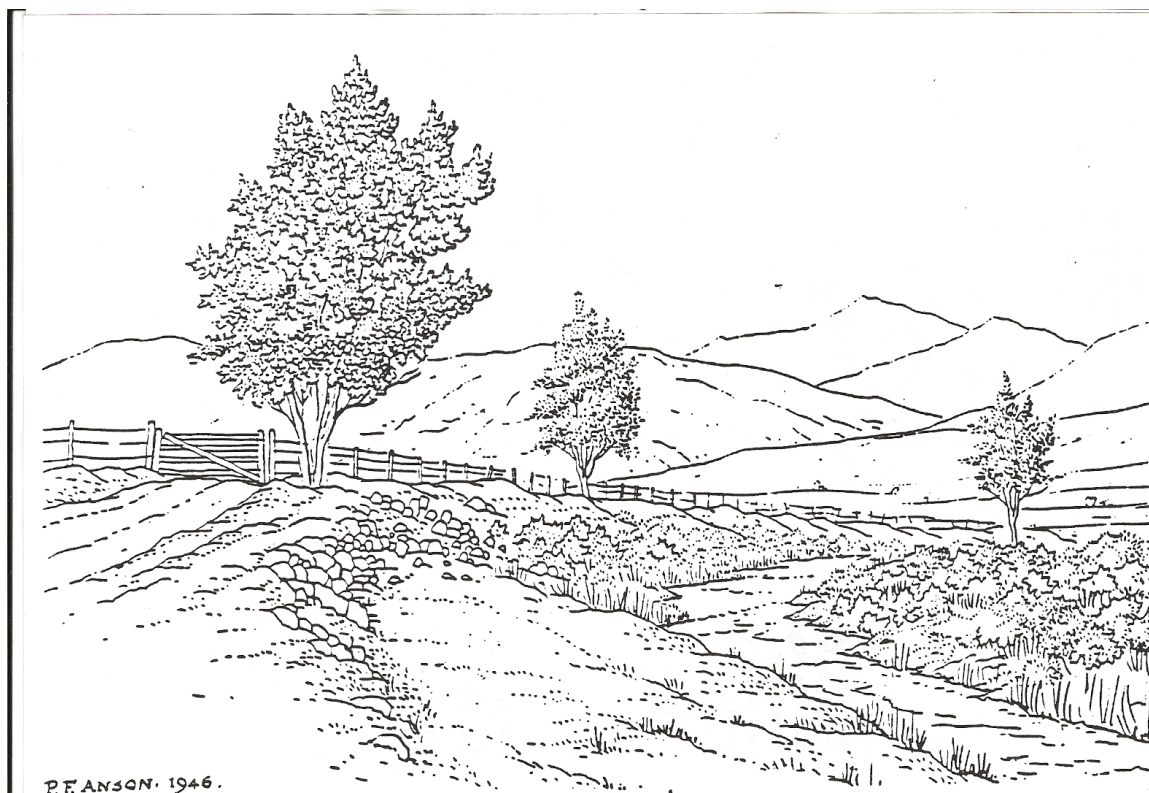
#### Editorial

As early as this second newsletter we (that's the editorial we) find ourselves committed to a regular output of future numbers. Thanks to the good offices of Fr Mark Dilworth, soon to move from Edinburgh to become Abbot of Fort Augustus, a request has come from the National Library of Scotland for back numbers. There is only one, and they have it. Scalan News has thus achieved a kind of early permanence which encourages us (that's all of us) to take the enterprise seriously.

The enterprise is first and foremost the preservation and restoration of Scalan as a building, and the management committee's activities to that end are outlined below. Beyond that, however, Scalan stands for a more general view of Catholic heritage. There is a Catholic Heritage Commission which meets regularly, and they are delighted to see what is being done in the name of Scalan.

So no apology is offered for the fact that the main item by David McNamee is not actually about Scalan but about the lowland area known as the Enzie (pronounced 'ingy'). Or McNamee represents Glasgow's homage to the Catholic north and to the old missionary priests who walked the ground.

The Peter Anson sketch on the facing page is of the Crombie Burn and beside it the ruins of the seminary destroyed after Culloden in 1746.



#### News and Events

Members should have received notice of the AGM on Tuesday 4 June from Fr Joseph Toal, Secretary of the Scalán Association, who has recently moved from South Uist to Campbeltown. Mass is at Scalán at 12.30, to be followed by lunch and then business at Chapelton. The minutes of last year's AGM will be the starting point for an account by the President, Mgr John Copeland, of what the management committee has achieved since then. Jane McEwan will explain how we are already more than half way towards our target of £20,000. She lives locally and it makes more sense for subscriptions to go to her as treasurer than to Fr Toal. Address:

Mrs Jane McEwan Ogilvie Cottage Gallowhill Glenlivet Banffshire AB3 9DL

She will also pass on letters to the editor. The three-fold brochure (available from her on request) mentions that 'Banker's Orders are welcome' but doesn't include a proforma. We decided at our last meeting on 20 May to put this right as an enclosure with the next newsletter. We also decided to seek charitable status, which depends on legal advice about the constitution of the Association.

Anne Baxter and her husband own the building which succeeded Scalán and preceded Blairs College Aquorthies near Kcmnay. She is a keen and business-like member of the committee. At her urging we have agreed to try and get the work of restoration started this summer, and an approach has been made to Or Bill Brogden of the Art College in Aberdeen for advice on tendering. She has since organised the sending of letters to a number of potential funders in hopes of closing the gap between the £12,000 we have in hand and the target figure. And she opened her house this spring for a charity lunch. Bishop Conti headed a distinguished guest list and Mgr Copeland gave a talk on Scalán. Almost £200 was raised and new members recruited, bringing the total above 180 - a hundred more than this time last year.

Bill McEwan, Jane's husband, is responsible for the brochure and particularly for its drawings and map, and his graphic skills continue to show themselves in unexpected ways. A tastefully designed emblem (not 'I • Scalán') was approved by the committee for use in car stickers and drinks mats. We don't want to commercialise Scalán but this is home-grown, and will enable people to take from what is now to be called the Annual National Pilgrimage (the Scalán Mass on Sunday 7 July) a small souvenir to show their friends. Bill is also responsible for the very attractive notice board at Scalán. It was erected shortly before last year's wet event at Chapelton so most members have yet to admire it. Bill goes over from time to time and does small jobs like planing the swollen front door - great man, great committee of mainly local people.

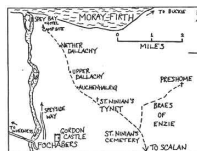
A new practice has begun of bringing primary seven classes up to the St Michael Centre Tomintoul for a retreat before Confirmation. Canon John Symon of the Cathedral in Aberdeen said mass at Scalán for the children and their teachers and conveyed to them something of his feeling for the place. There are rumours of Catenians and Old Aloysians planning summer trips to Scalán, but the main event is the Annual Scalán Mass on Sunday 7 July at the earlier time of 3.00. Bring food and drink - this year there will be portaloos!

#### The Chisholm Trail

David McNamee

If the Chisholm Trail means anything to readers it is likely to be the 750-mile cattle trail starting at San Antonio, Texas, and finishing on the Kansas Pacific Railroad at Abilene, Kansas. This article deals with another Chisholm Trail which starts at the mouth of the Spey and ends on an island in Loch Linnhe, offering a 200-mile search for Catholic history. Why I have chosen to call this the Chisholm Trail will be revealed in due course.

It still comes as a surprise to most Scottish Catholics to learn that in a number of areas of their native land the Catholic practice of religion survived the Reformation in a few



Hebridean islands, on the West coast and here, where our trail begins, in North-east Scotland. Survival could depend on various factors. Remoteness meant less interference from the new religions of Scotland, but gave almost as much trouble to the missionary priests who tried to serve these areas. The most important factor in this case was the loyalty to the old faith of the dukes of Gordon. Around their castle, close to the Spey at Fochabers, priests could operate with less fear of the Protestant authorities.

So ... begin at Fochabers, which is easily reached by bus from Aberdeen or Inverness, and walk along the bank of the river to Spey Bay following the Speyside Way. If it is the first time you have seen the Spey, be prepared to fall under its special charm; you will meet it again on the second stage of the Trail. There is a camp site at Spey Bay and also a hotel.

For the next section you will need a map 0:50,000 OS 28) and a compass, although it is mostly road walking. Leave Spey Bay by the main road and take the left forie to Nether Dallachy, following the perimeter road of the old airfield, with Upper Dallachy and Auchenhairig as your targets. A path between two fields and then a forest track will take you from there to Newlands and St Ninian's, Tynet, one of the most interesting sites of post-Reformation Catholic history. Moreover, you will have come to it in the correct manner, on foot from Auchenhairig where the priest used to live.

What you will find is a long whitewashed building, looking rather like a sheep-cote or byre, which is what it was intended to look like. In 1755 when the aptly named priest Alexander Godsmán organised the construction it was not advisable to advertise that a building was to be used for Catholic worship. A few decades earlier the Catholic population was in the habit of using a church on the site we are next to visit, a mile or so to the south-east, but a local minister broke in with a group in support and took the church over for his own service. The fact that the church in what is now St Ninian's Cemetery was there at all stemmed from the protection of the dukes of Gordon. But when the building became a focus of dissension it fell into ruin. It was last used in 1728 for the Lying in State of Duke Alexander, the last of the Catholic Gordons.

As time passed the sheep-cote church (sometimes called the 'Banffshire Bethlehem') also deteriorated. In 1948 Fr Pat Grady was appointed to his first parish at Tynet after serving as curate at Inverness. Three years later he completed the repair of the fabric (dry rot had spread through the woodwork) with the help of a Glasgow-based Tynet Committee. Or Mary Bonnyman and her husband Or Joseph Rolly, on hearing Fr Grady's plans, rallied their friends and raised the funds needed to complete the restoration. The slates came from the older St Ninian's in 1787 along with the dove over the altar - incidentally the first in Scotland, anticipating Vatican II, which allowed a priest to face the people. It would be a good way to start your walk through Catholic history if you were able to hear Mass in the oldest post-Reformation church still in use. There is no

resident priest so it would be prudent to confirm the times of Mass from St Mary's Fochabers.

Leave Tynet in a south-easterly direction and turn left on to the A98 and leave it after half a kilometre, turning right on to a minor road which takes you to St Ninian's Cemetery. This was the site of a pre-Reformation church and also of the church referred to above, although only the smallest fragment is left to remind us of the history. The keystone of the door, bearing the date 1688, is built into the facade of the priests' mortuary chapel. In this cemetery is buried a man from the neighbouring county of Banff, born into an Episcopalian family in 1645, who was to become professor of Greek, mathematics and philosophy at Glasgow University. After his conversion he became a priest, a missionary in Scotland, a prisoner in Stirling Castle, an exile and lastly on this earth, the first vicar apostolic (or bishop) of Scotland. This man was Thomas Nicolson. In the last capacity he had responsibility under Rome for the whole of Scotland, both Lowland and Highland.

Spend a little time in the cemetery, thinking and praying for those priests who served Scotland in the hard centuries following the Reformation. They lived in secrecy, hardship and poverty, taking as little as possible from their poor flocks and struggling to survive on the meagre subsidies from Rome. When you have reached the rougher mountainous sections of the Chisholm Trail, you might consider the ease with which you cope with rain, sleet and snow thanks to your Goretex lightweight tent, underlay, sleeping bag and Gaz stove, and contrast them with the resources available to the missionaries when visiting their scattered people.

Leave St Ninian's cemetery and continue in a south-easterly direction for a few hundred metres and when you join the B9016, begin to walk back in a northerly direction until you meet a crossroads at which you turn right, passing through Clochan as you make your way to St Gregory's Preshome. Arriving on foot, the church will reveal itself quite suddenly (depending on the season) and with surprising impact. It sits on rising ground, discreetly within a beautiful stand of trees. As you were struck by the simplicity of Tynet, so you will be surprised by the elegance of St Gregory's, Preshome. It was here that Bishop Nicolson took up residence in 1697, and subsequent vicars apostolic used Preshome as their centre of operations for over a century. In 1707 Scotland was divided into two vicariates, the Lowland and Highland Districts, with the dividing line running (very) roughly from Dumbarton to Nairn. Preshome was therefore the focal point of the Lowland District. From there the care of the small Catholic population of Glasgow, for example, was to be managed. (As late as 1780 Glasgow had some half dozen Catholic families and no resident priest.)

St Gregory's carries the date 1188 above the main door and was begun when the remarkable George Hay was vicar apostolic of the Lowland District. Recalling that the Penal Laws against Catholic worship were still in force at that time, it suggests that feeling in the Enzie district anticipated the relaxation of the laws against Catholics which occurred in 1793. The church could not have been built in secret, so it was obviously tolerated by the authorities.

The next section of the pilgrimage will take us from Preshome over the wooded hill to Keith. Then begins the long haul up to Scalan,

<To be continued>

#### From Our Readers

We received your Scalan News and think it is wonderful! We are the couple who found our way to your cosy home at Gallowhill in October, where you kindly gave us tea. My mother was born at Chapelton in the farmhouse directly across from the church - Ron and Rita Fyffe, Vancouver ... Thank you so very much for sending me the Scalan newsletter - packed with interest. I didn't know there was such a thing Rennie McOwan, Stirling ... I was delighted to receive the newsletter and am only too happy to see something stirring around the Scalan - Fr Michael Briody, Coatbridge ... Although I have been a member for a year or two I have never managed to come and see the place. However it looks as if I may be up with some members of Our Lady's Sodality of St Aloysius, Glasgow, on June 1. Most are former pupils of the College. On the Sunday we will be going to Keith for Mass and a breath of St John Ogilvie - Fausto Ferrari, Glasgow ... Congratulations on the Newsletter recently received. I look forward to the next number and wish all concerned every success - Elizabeth McLaughlin, Rutherglen ... I have just read the first edition of Scalan News and realised that the Royal Scots College in Salamanca does not subscribe to the Scalan Association. This is a serious and unforgivable omission since our second founder, John Geddes, was so closely associated with the old seminary. I wish you every success Rt. Rev. Ian Murray, Rector. **Piping Postscript**

Some people (friends!) said there was far too much about me in the last newsletter. I agree, but here's an interesting sequel to that story about the old way to Scalan ('Lost in the Mist') and bagpipes. During the last year or so I've been going to an ex-police pipe major to learn pibroch. My tutor, no Catholic, picked on a remarkable first tune, granted that his pupil is a mouthpiece (some mouth, say friends) of the Scalan Association.

'The Little Spree' (An Daorach Bheag) is said to have been written by a McGregor, the proscribed Clan whose name was banned by King James VI's government. Some of them became aggressive Papists in the hills north of Balmoral, and the parish priest of Banchory and Aboyne is descended from them. According to my book of tunes the composer, 'a blacksmith, was famous not only for his heroism in battle but also for his extended bouts of drinking.' Hence the name - there are two other pibrochs by him called 'The Big Spree' and 'The Middling Spree'. All that seems a bit disreputable for the Scalan Association, but here is the interesting part: There is, however, another tradition regarding the composition of these tunes and more specifically the use of the word spree. It is maintained that they were composed to celebrate convocations of Roman Catholics at a time when they were not allowed to worship openly in Scotland and that the word "spree" was used in order to divert attention from the real nature of the occasion.'

McGregors were close neighbours in the Braes of Mar and even closer at Gaulrig south of Tomintoul, so it is more than likely that 'The Little Spree' was played in these parts to call people to mass at Scalan. 'Convocations of Roman Catholics' have formed the habit of returning there, and if I can find my way from the Well of the Lecht in time this year I'll play the pibroch for you.

Alasdair Roberts

PPS Those who are willing to entrust themselves to a guide whose track record is only moderate should assemble at the Well of the Lecht picnic area around 12.30 on 7th July.