

## Scalan News

Official Voice of the Scalan Association. Nov.2008 No 37



The altar at St. Gregory's

### Presholme in the Enzie

The history of Presholme stretches back about three hundred years and gives an indication of the history of the whole northern district.

The reformation was carried out over in the fifteen hundreds and by the seventeen hundreds the Catholic Church in Scotland had few resources and a chronic shortage of priests. The majority of the people in the north of the country were Catholics, the majority living in the Glenlivet area and The Enzie.

Presholme is in a central position in the Enzie; one derivation of Presholme was

priest's home conjuring up a nice secure area inhabited by the Catholic clergy. The true meaning is Presh- the bush and tom- the hill.

The acts of 1609 and 1625 were passed by the Scottish parliament with the intention of severing the arteries of the Catholic Church. These did not have the desired effect in Scotland so in 1687 William III issued an edict for the seizure and banishment of all Jesuit and trafficking papists which resulted in large numbers of Catholics fleeing Britain. In Northern Scotland priests and practising Catholics went 'underground'. Priests travelled incognito holding Mass when and where they were able; back rooms, barns and secluded woods. Their followers assumed aliases; in the Scaln area, John Stuart alias More, Alex McAlly alias Stuart, John Roy became Grant, William Stuart was known as Bane to name a few.

The Catholic Duke of Gordon owned extensive lands in the north and was very active in the Stuart cause. It was from the old Gordon Castle at Focabers that the 'the Gudemen of the Bog' or 'Cocks of the North' marched to Flodden in 1513, Pinkie in 1547 and Sherrifmuir in 1715 under the Earls, later marquis of Huntly who was created Duke of Gordon in 1684.

The Duke shielded his people from the worst of the Penal Laws so it is hardly surprising that when Bishop Nicholson was released from prison in 1697 he chose to live at Presholme only five miles from Gordon Castle. From here he travelled far and wide in northern Scotland assessing the state of Catholicism and installing priests in new stations. He always returned to his quaint dwelling in the Enzie, 'the Papistical country' He died in 1718 and was buried in St. Ninians cemetery. Priests are still laid to rest at St. Ninian's and Monsignor Eddie Traynor, ( Buckie priest who died in 2006) was buried alongside many well respected clergy.

About a quarter of a mile from Presholme was the primitive 'Chapel of the Craigs' gutted by the English soldiers returning from Culloden. The books and vestments were carried to Cullen market place and burnt. Could this have been a warning to the Catholics especially those living in Cullen House the Earl of Findlater's home? The congregation secretly celebrated Mass in a small room in Presholme. In 1765 Mr George Hay (later Bishop) had the Chapel of St. Margaret's of the Craig rebuilt and was once again used for divine service. The chapel was in a ravine and scouts were posted to watch out for red-coats whilst people were at Mass.

Mr. George Hay took up his missionary career in 1759 living at Presholme close by his relations Hays of Rannes and, with their influence, was able to secure greater tolerance for Catholics. He was a man of many talents excelling in music, singing and playing the violin. He was apprenticed to a surgeon in Edinburgh before joining the Young Pretender's army where he treated the wounded at the Battle of Prestonpans. In 1748 he was received into the Catholic Church, studied in Rome and was ordained in 1758. Bishop Nicholson wanted to see would be priests educated in Scotland but died before Scaln was established in 1716. Bishop Hay remained actively involved with the Seminary and the students and oversaw the removal to Aquhorties in 1799.

Unfortunately for the Catholics of Scotland, the duke of Gordon died in 1728 and his protestant wife, Henrietta, brought the children up in her own faith. She did promise to safeguard the Catholics but change was on its way.

Letterfourie in the Enzie became the mainstay of the Catholic faith. Not far from here was the Mains of Corridoun, birthplace of Bishop Geddes. Nearby at Pathhead, Dr. Geddes and Bishop Patterson were born. Bishop Gordon a cadet of Letterfourie was born at Glastirium.

The Letterfourie family provided funds for the building of the church at Presholme built by the Reverent John Reid. The foundation stone was laid by the Gordon brothers of Letterfourie in 1788. In 1790 St. Gregory's of Presholme was open for worship. A painting by

Carracci was donated by the last Earl of Findlater of Cullen House and hangs above the altar still. The ceiling is timber tracery and the floor decorative clay tiles. The exterior is Baroque and high above the front entry is a free stone tablet which was originally meant to carry the coat of arms of the Letterfourie family but at their request carried Deo 'dedicated to God'. It is a magnificent church steeped in history. In 1790 the resident priest or priests would have seen a sea of heads when standing in the pulpit but today there isn't a priest resident at Presholme. Like so many in the rural areas the congregation has dwindled away and a number are served by one priest. Until recently Presholme was open on special occasions but when Father Jerry Livingston took over St. Peter's in Buckie he decided to hold Mass every third Thursday of the month at 7pm in the summer season. This has proved a great success and is a step forward for St. Gregory's Presholme.

Further information Phone St Peter's Buckie 01542 832196

## **John Gordon (Birkenbush)**

### **Student 1743-1754**

John Gordon was born at Birkenbush situated in the Enzie. He was sent to the Scots College Paris in 1724 and expelled in 1732 for holding strong Jansenist views. He received his subdiaconate in Troyes from Jacques Bossuet, a notorious Jansenist, thus he avoided subscribing to *Unigenitus*. He was admitted to Scalán in 1732 and was ordained by Bishop Gordon in 1734.

He served at Presholme from 1735 to 1742 then moved to Aberdeen for three years. His last move was to Buchan in 1747. In 1750 he left the mission, apostatised, and later married. He died in 1783.

## **Dugald Macdonald**

### **Student 1735-1737**

Dugald Macdonald was born in 1720 in Catholic South Uist. He enrolled at Scalán 1725 and in 1737 travelled to The Scots College Rome. He was ordained in 1746 but did not return to South Uist until 1748. He died in 1751, a young man.

## **Robert Grant**

### **Student 1736-1740**

Robert Grant was born at Blairfindy in Glenlivet in 1720. He was enrolled at Scalan in 1736 and in 1738 transferred to The Scots College, Paris finally travelling to The Scots College Rome where he was ordained in 1748. He returned to Scotland and had five stations between 1749 and 1764. He was appointed Rector of The Scots College Douai; this college was founded by William Allan for English Priests in 1568 for the translation of the Reims-Douai Bible and managed by the Scottish Jesuit William Crichton in 1593. Robert Grant held this post until his death in 1784.

## John (Johnnie) Gordon

### Student 1743-1754

Johnnie Gordon was known as 'the local lad' having been born at Glenlivet in 1729. He was fourteen years of age when he entered Scalan in 1743; Mr. Duthrie was Master. He was probably too young to be recruited into the Jacobite army but would have known many who were itching to be off fighting the Hanoverians. His wish was to be ordained as a priest and to keep the Catholic Faith alive.

After the Jacobite defeat at Culloden, the victors were on the rampage looting, burning and priest hunting. No Catholic was really safe; their buildings were wrecked and torched. Johnnie, like so many, could only pray and watch. Scalan's turn arrived on May 16<sup>th</sup>; fortunately the Master had prior warning, time to remove possessions, furniture, vestments, documents and books and hide them well away. Johnnie and the other boys were sent home for safety but the Master, in hiding, watched the college burning. He moved to temporary premises in lower Glenlivet and was able to continue teaching Johnnie.

In the spring of 1749 they returned to a hastily rebuilt Scalan using the existing foundations and walls. Despite the upheaval of the last five years Johnnie continued to make good progress. Originally he, like so many others, was to be finished at the Scots College Paris but circumstances made it inadvisable to send him there.

Johnnie Gordon finished his studies and was ordained by Bishop Smith in Edinburgh in 1754; only one of three students to receive their entire training at "the Seminary in the hills". The other two were George J. Gordon and Francis Macdonell.

These three fulfilled the founder's dream, a seminary where the boys entered as youngsters and left as priests. All three attended during the first forty years. About eight students received part of their senior training at Scalan but started learning elsewhere. For the remainder of the time Scalan was a junior seminary only.

To return to Johnnie Gordon: after his ordination he returned to the Glenlivet Mission in 1755 where he worked day and night for the parish. Within two years he caught a cold

which turned into a raging fever. In those days bleeding was the cure; he was bled three times, became delirious and finally he died with his old Master, Mr. Duthie, by his side. A tragic end for a 28 year old priest who had everything to give.

## **Alexander Geddes (Sandy)**

### **Student 1755-1758**

Alexander Geddes, known as Sandy, was born in 1737 at Pathhead near Preshome. He studied at Scalan from 1755-1758 when he entered the Scots College Paris, being ordained in 1764.

His time spent at Scalan marked him out as an extraordinary student, excelling in Greek and Latin. Whilst at the college he had a very bad bout of stranguary (blockage or irritation at the base of the bladder); it was feared that he would not be able to finish his studies. This was unfounded and in 1758 he entered the Scots College Paris, being ordained in 1764. He was unlike the rest of the clergy having very strong views and showing signs of eccentricity. Scalan gave him a good start but in later years he blamed his time spent there for his permanently damaged health.

Instead of returning to Scotland he took up a teaching post at the Sorbonne where he made a lasting impression. In 1769 He returned to Aberdeenshire to take up a post at Auchinhalrig. Whilst there he acquired a reputation for numerous charitable acts but along side this he criticized established theological ideas; this did not go down well with the established Catholic clergy or the laity. He became isolated for the main body of the Catholic Mission. He was removed from his post for attending an Episcopalian service.

He retired to London where he published a Hebrew bible and numerous eminent works. He was the most prolific Scottish reformist radical of the 1790s. Two of his poems have allegedly been attributed to Robert Burns, the jury is out: his name still lingers on; his books are still obtainable. He died in 1802 in the city of London, the place he chose to call his home.

## **Alexander Kennedy**

### **Student 1756-1759 1765-1766**

This student was born somewhere in Perthshire, date and place unknown. He attended Scalan from 1756 to 1759 causing friction amongst fellow students. He travelled to the Scots college Rome to further his education; after six years returning to Scalan without being ordained. Mr. Kennedy was appointed a sub-deacon but was refused further promotion owing to behavioural

problems. His return to Scalán in 1765 was not welcomed by Mr. Geddes who felt his reputation in the area and his unsettling effect on fellow students was not in the college's best interests. After a year, Mr. Geddes asked Mr. Smith to remove him and he briefly returned to Rome in 1767 returning once again to complete his studies under the guidance of George Hay at Presholme. He was ordained by Bishop Hugh McDonald in 1767 and left to take up a post in Arisaig and the Small Islands where he died seven years later in 1773. Despite his disruptive behaviour as a young man he proved to be an excellent priest and was a great loss to the Highland Vicariate.

## **Alexander Cameron**

### **Student 1760-1764 Bishop 1798-1828**

Alexander was born in July 1747 at Auchindryne Braemar, to James Cameron and Marjory (Helen) McIntosh. He was the grand nephew of Thomas Brockie, the Cabrach priest whom he lived with before entering Scalán at the age of twelve in 1760. He spent four years at the college, the last two being tutored by John Geddes. In 1764 he travelled to Rome to continue his studies at the Scots College where he was ordained in February 1772. Because of the need of priests in Scotland he was called back to take charge of the Tomintoul Mission in Strathavon where he remained for eight years. In the summer of 1780 he travelled to the Scots College at Valladolid to take up the position of rector. He was thirty three years old and had only been a priest for eight years.





## The house and vine

He took over from John Geddes late in 1781 and continued the work of enlarging the college and acquiring land for its use. A house was built in the Boecillo District for the students to use. Over a period of six years he purchased (in his name) vineyards by the river Duero. The money raised from the wine benefited the college. He arranged for this land to pass to his successors; this continued until 1941.

In 1798 he was appointed Bishop but did not return to Scotland until the summer of 1802. In August 1805 he took up the post of Lowland Apostolic. He died February 1828 in Edinburgh.

## **John Gordon (Clashnoir)**

### **Student 1760 - 1764**

John Gordon was born at Clashnoir (about 1½ miles from Scalan) in May 1747, son of John Gordon and Jean Nairn, nephew of Abbé Peter Grant. He studied at Scalan for four years, the last two under the tutelage of John Geddes. He and Alexander Cameron were pupils together and both travelled to Rome to complete their education at the Scots College. John Gordon was ordained in 1773 and the following year returned to Scotland. He spent two years in Aberdeen and in 1776 left to take up the vice rectorship of the Scots college Valladolid, a position he held under John Geddes and Alexander Cameron.. He was appointed rector in January 1799, succeeding Alexander Cameron when he was made bishop. Unfortunately for John Gordon he was unable to carry out his duties owing to the continual interference from the bishop who didn't return to Scotland until 1802.

John Gordon did not have an easy time of it as rector; by 1807 Spain had allowed the French armies to enter the country and by 1808 the country was in revolt. Gordon sent the Scottish students home but he, with Alexander Cameron II, elected to remain and safeguard the college and its assets. In 1809 he left for France to 'take the waters'. He did not return to Spain but died in February 1810 in obscurity. Far from his native land of Scotland and away from his adopted home where he lived and worked for thirty three years.

### **Points of Interest**

1. Very few rowan berries on the trees at Scalan owing to lack of fertilization of the flowers. A marked lack of butterflies and flying insects, a repeat of summer 2007.
2. First snow on the top at Scalan 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct.
3. On the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008 the first skeins of pink footed geese were spotted flying south. I wonder how long they have been coming from Svalberg and Northern Norway; another clear day would see them at Kinross , one of their winter feeding grounds.
4. The Carrick's wood on the left of the track to Scalan is due to be felled this October. It



certainly wont be a quiet walk to Scalan but it could be interesting; plenty to see. When they come to replant, a large percentage will be deciduous trees to encourage wildlife.



5. Scalan now has its own chalice plus carry case courtesy of the McDermott family. The inscription reads

The Scalan Association. Pray for Hugh And Stella McDermott and their family.

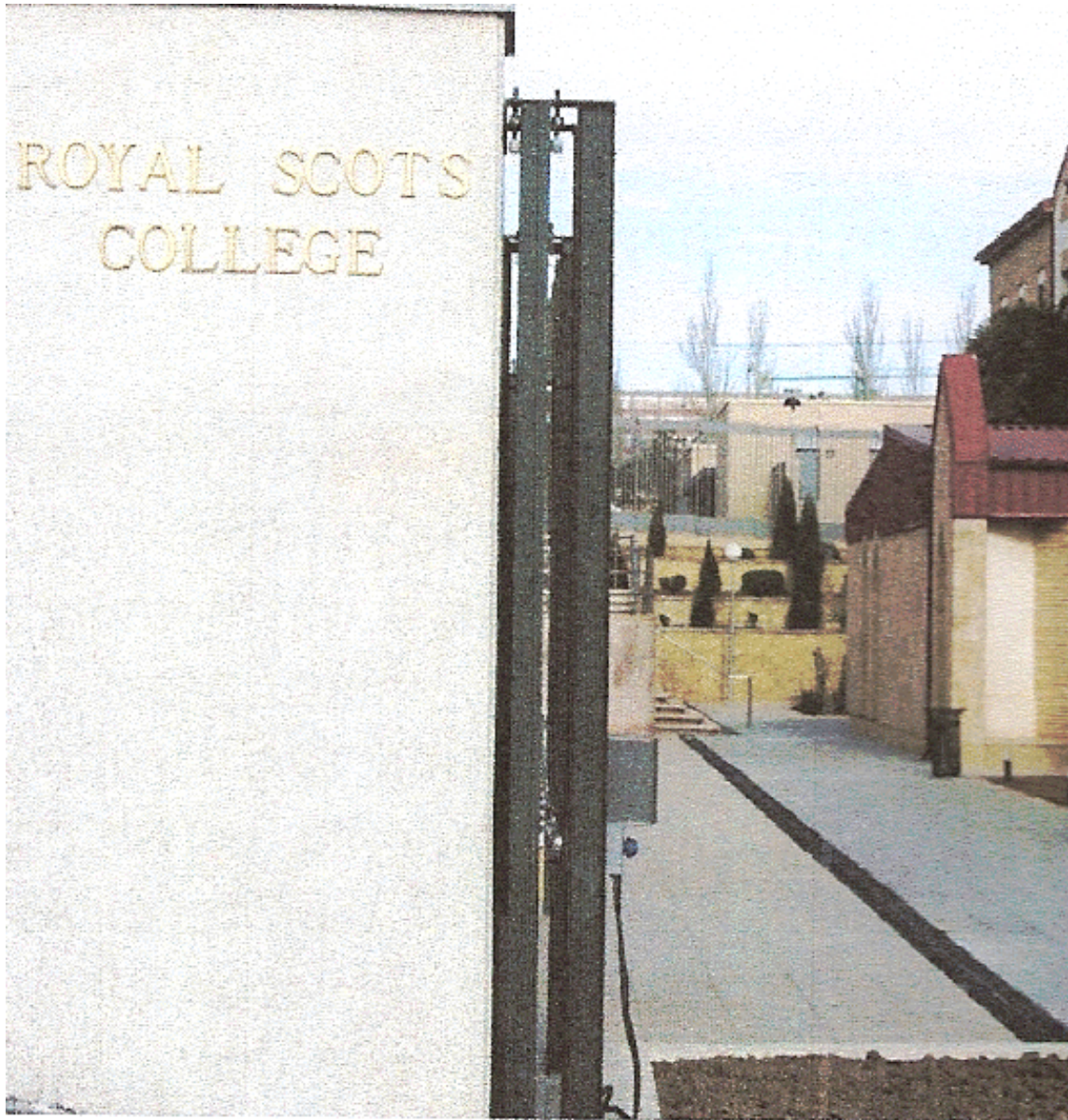
6. The reproduction painting on the back page of the Newsletter was painted in 2005 by J. Cannovan D.A. B.A. hons. This picture is available in two sizes of card, left blank for your message. Very good quality card made from pulp from sustainable forests ecf low chlorine recyclable. I, Sylvia Toovey as Editor am selling the cards; all profit made will go to Scalan funds

Large cards 21 cm. x 15 cm £2.00 p&p .50p for one or two Larger nos. £1.00

Small cards 14¾ cm x 10½ cm £1.50 p&p .50 for one or two Larger nos. £1.00

Overseas p&p £1.50

## THE ROYAL SCOTS COLLEGE IN SALAMANCA.



### The Royal Scots College Salaman

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In 1988 the decision was taken by the Scottish Bishops to move the Royal Scots College from its location in Valladolid in the Calle Santuario, its home since 1771, to Salamanca. One of the residences owned by the Marists on the western fringe of the city was rented and the community and the college possessions were moved over the summer to the historic university town of Salamanca on the banks of the River Tormes. It had been felt that it would be beneficial for the Scots College in Spain to offer an extended theological formation for its students by attending the Pontifical University in Salamanca, thus sharing with the Scots College in Rome the possibility of offering them a licentiate and doctorate in Theology, Canon

Law or Philosophy. The students, mostly Scots, but including some from other countries attended the university and over these few years a number of them did gain licences in the three disciplines, which have been put to use in the Scottish National Tribunal and in Scotus College in Glasgow.

In the mid 90s the building was bought from the Marists and then extensively renovated to a very good standard with en-suite rooms being provided for all staff, students and visitors, and has been much admired since for the comfortable and pleasant accommodation provided within. However, as the number of Scottish seminarians declined, the choice was made towards the end of 2002 not to send further students to Salamanca “in the meantime”. The community moved on quite quickly – some being ordained and returning to Scotland, some moving to the Scots College in Rome, and a couple remaining to finish their course at the “Pont” before returning home for ordination.

In the summer of 2004, therefore, the college began offering its facilities to Christian clergy and laity, mostly from Scotland, England and Ireland, for retreats, conferences, on-going formation courses, sabbaticals, and parish-pilgrimage holidays and between the various groups good use has been made of the college, especially from Easter through to October. Groups of up to 45 people can be accommodated, and there is often space also for families and individuals, with one room now adapted for the physically incapacitated. Many of the facilities in college have been recently upgraded to provide a comfortable and relaxing stay for the various users and hopefully those who come do enjoy their stay in the college and will plan a return visit.

Most visitors enjoy Salamanca itself with its magnificent Plaza Mayor, its two cathedrals and universities, together with other fine buildings, it offers a good location to visit the other towns of Castile, and even to venture into Portugal. It is an area with a strong spiritual heritage and the links with the great Spanish mystics – Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross – opens up opportunities of combining reflection and study with visits to the places associated with these holy people.

Within the college also we offer a daily spiritual programme, with Eucharist and Morning and Evening Prayer, but the groups who come are free to arrange their own spiritual activities and time-table. The hope is though that the atmosphere in the house will continue to be blessed by the Holy Spirit and that the task of praying for vocations to priesthood and for those in ministry will always be foremost in our thoughts. The future path of the college may be unclear at present but the hope is that it will continue in some way to contribute to the building-up of the Church in Scotland and elsewhere, especially through the formation of candidates for priesthood and of those already ministering to the flock of Christ the Good Shepherd.

*By Mgr. Joseph Toal.*

**Scalan Mass**

## July 2008

The Annual Pilgrimage to Scalan took place as usual on the first Thursday of July, which fell this year, 2008, on the 1st July. Last year's report contained the following observations about the weather:

The weather in the preceding week was very wet and the forecast for the Sunday was not at all promising. Would we have to retreat to the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at Chapeltown of Glenlivet for the first time in years? It certainly looked like it on the day itself, but we persevered down the road to Scalan and were rewarded with a lovely occasion, devoid of any rain enough to bother us and blessed with a celebration of Mass which renewed our love for this holy place which speaks so powerfully of the love of God in young men preparing themselves to give over their entire lives to the task of bringing the Mass and the Sacraments to the people of Scotland.

Any of the 185 people who attended this year will agree that the worry over the weather was even greater than the previous year but once again the rain held off until the end of Mass, and it was nothing to trouble us. In the twenty years that we have held the annual Mass, I can only remember two occasions when we have had to retreat to Chapeltown

Mass was celebrated by Canon Brian Halloran, parish priest of the University town of St. Andrew's and President of the Scalan Association, assisted by Deacon Vincent McQuaid (Elgin). The concelebrants were Monsignor John McIntyre (Baillieston), past president, Mgr. Robert McDonald (Focabers), Mgr. Joseph Toal (Salamanca), Canon Donald MacKay (Oban), Fathers Gilmour McDermott (Plymouth Diocese) John Kelly (Coatbridge), Eddie McGhee (Kilmarnock), Gerry Livingstone (Buckie), Jim Thomson (Stepps) and Michael Briody, (Moodiesburn) secretary of the Association.





**The homily was provided by Very Rev. Donald Canon MacKay, Administrator of St. Columba's Cathedral, Oban. As a Gaelic speaker, he drew our attention to the bad blood that existed between the Highland and Lowland students at Scalán, mainly over the Highlanders insistence on speaking Gaelic among themselves. Some students were dismissed from the college over this in 1730. In 1727, the ecclesiastical map of Catholic Scotland had been divided up into two districts, Highland and Lowland, based largely on language, rather than geography, recognising the distinctive cultures. Scalán**

actually became the seminary for the Lowland District (because, although it was a Gaelic-speaking area, Bishop Gordon wanted to hold onto Scalán, which was his creation), and the Highland students were eventually recalled from there by Bishop Hugh MacDonald in 1732 and settled on Eilean Ban on Loch Morar. It is indeed surprising, as Canon MacKay pointed out, that “in the Scalán context of such imminent danger from persecution and external hostility that ... its inhabitants engaged in, and seemed more concerned with, internal strife and jealousies”. But before we rush to condemn, Canon MacKay warned, we can be guilty of watching the world around us become largely apathetic to religious observance and creed, and guilty too of hearing our moral standards and respect for life being dismissed as irrelevant, while we are meantime consumed with internal and largely irrelevant conflicts. We can lose sight of the bigger picture because of narrow, local introspective concerns. People may bemoan the shortage of vocations to the priesthood today, comparing the large numbers of the past, but we live in very different times. The climate has changed and we should marvel at the young people who offer themselves for the priesthood today. In its 80 years of existence, Scalán “only” produced about one priest a year for Scotland. That may not sound a lot, but it was crucial for the revival of the Church in our land.

Two hundred and nine years later from the closure of Scalán, the story is still pretty much the same - the flame of faith (smouldering perhaps again for other reasons) is now in our hands to keep alight and, importantly, to pass on... the situation appears precarious now as then...but the same gospel resounds in our ears here today as resounded in the ears of the community here over 200 years ago - the irresistible invitation of Jesus: 'Come to me...for rest...shoulder my yoke - allow me to be that close to you...to carry your load and troubles and concerns and difficulties...in a word - your cross...with you...today.' We do this in the context of the Church's perfect worship of God, the Eucharist. Here, Jesus is today by our side - gentle and humble - as he was by the side of all who lived and worshipped here in times gone by”.

Canon MacKay provided us with history, humour, spirituality and optimism, or Christian Hope to give it its proper name, and we thank him for the trouble he took to provide us with a thought-provoking homily for our annual Mass.



**Music at the Mass was provided by the music ministry of St. Peter's, Buckie and we thank them for their support again this year. Music of a different kind was provided, as we arrived at Scalan, by piper Jimmy Stewart. It is one of those nice touches which individual members of the Association have the initiative to supply for this occasion and a special word of thanks must be given to the local committee and their helpers for the practical arrangements for setting things up for the Mass and, with the help of some of the pilgrims present, tidying up after Mass was over.**

**One aspect of the event is the practice of car drivers picking up pilgrims who find the last mile to Scalan difficult walking, and transporting them back after Mass. This is something which is greatly appreciated, and helps to strengthen the sense that we are a Family of Faith as we gather to celebrate the Annual Mass at Scalan.**

*Michael Briody (secretary)*

Office Bearers

**Association President:**

Very Rev. Canon Brian Halloran

St James, 17, The Scores, St. Andrews, KY16 9AR

Tel. 01334 472856

**Treasurer and Membership Secretary:**

Mrs Jane McEwan

Ogilvie Cottage, Gallowhill, Glenlivet AB37 9DL

Tel 01807 590340

*All correspondence regarding the Association should be directed to Mrs Jane McEwan*

**AGM Secretary:**

Rev. Michael Briody,

St. Michael's, 133 Glenmore Avenue, Moodiesburn, G69 0DL

Tel. 01236 872537

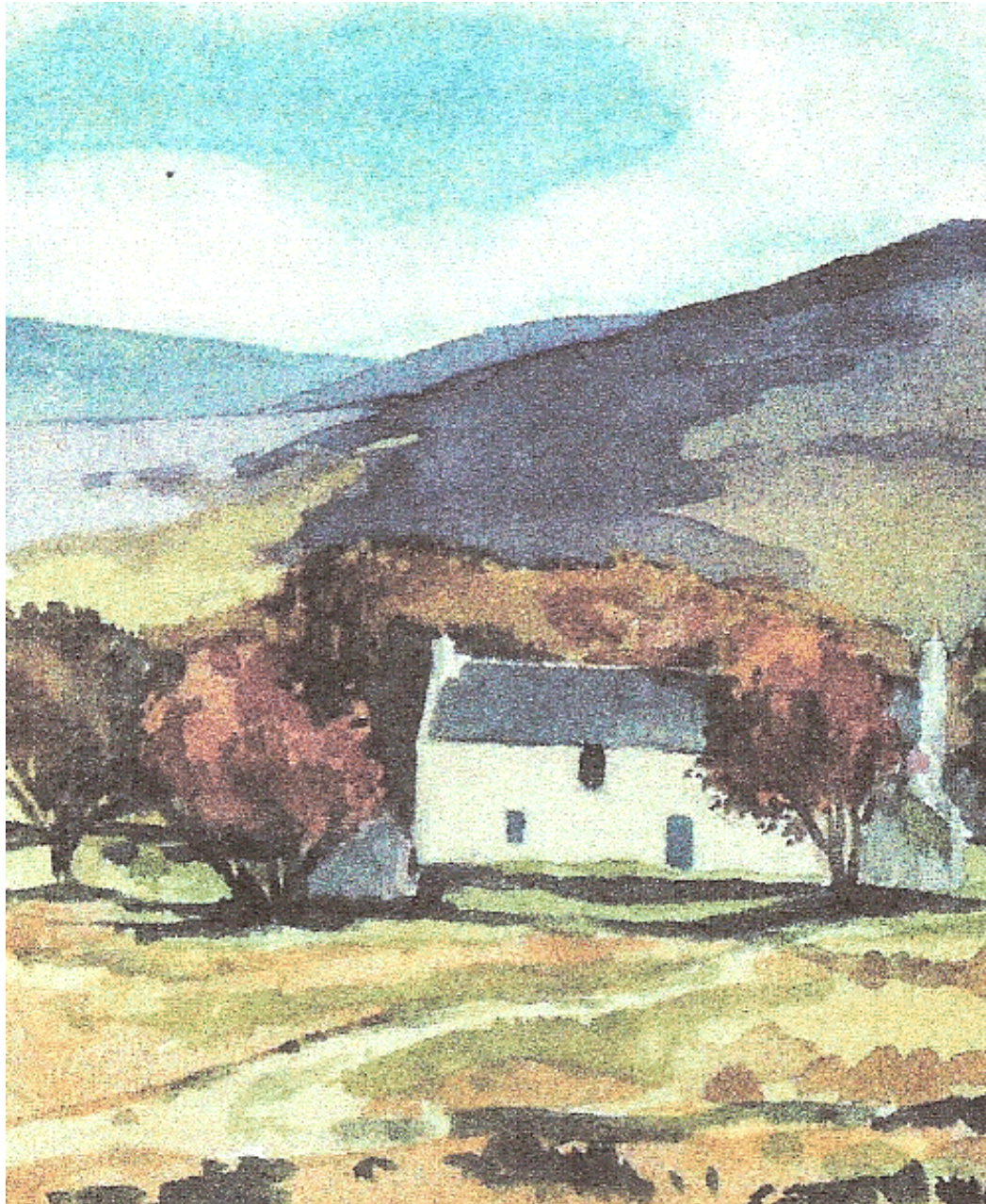
**Editorial Team:**

Mrs Sylvia Toovey, Miss Ann Dean, Mrs Elizabeth Beaton.

This is your newsletter and the committee would welcome your ideas, views and news. Correspondence can be sent to Sylvia Toovey, Chapel House, Chapeltown of Glenlivet, Ballindalloch. AB37 9JS. Tel. 01807 590295. Emails. [johnsylvia-braes@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:johnsylvia-braes@hotmail.co.uk)

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Scalan Painted by J. Canovan 2005

When the shadows fall upon hill and glen, and the bird music is mute;  
When the silken dark is a friend and the river sings to a star,  
Asl thyself brother; ask thyself sister, the question thou alone hast power  
to answer:

O Kind and Saviour of all, what is thy gift to me, and do I use it to Thy  
pleasing.

