



No. 20, June 2000

'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)



Ann Dean's **drawing** is of the ruined chapel of St Ninian's at Fetternear, near Aquhorties, which is the neglected burial place of Bishop Hay.

Scalan AGM There was a good turn out of thirty members on 6 June, when Mass was celebrated in the dormitory by Mgr Copland, Mgr John McIntyre and Fr Michael Briody. Mgr Copland is on doctor's orders to conserve his voice (so resonant in the hymns in past years) so Fr Briody spoke of the struggle which was Scalan. After the first ever catered lunch for such an occasion (local volunteers also suffering from age and infirmity) the minutes of last year's meeting were accepted and Mgr Copland gave his annual report as President. The interior work at Scalan is to be done by Beverley & Sons of Rhynie: the firm was awarded the contract on grounds of cost and willingness to do the work in phases, starting with the ground floor on 3 July.

Jane McEwan reported that the Association was doing very well financially, with £17,144 in hand thanks to record levels of subscriptions, donations and last year's Scalan Mass collection. Four recent grant applications were awaiting a reply, and a bequest of £5,000 was received from the late Monica Anton (R.I.P.) after the auditing of accounts, so it does not look as if the completion of the restoration will be hindered by lack of funds. It was nevertheless agreed, on the proposal of the new Secretary Fr Briody, that in future the AGM material would be sent out with *Sealan News* in order to save expenditure on stamps. Bishop Hay, who kept a close eye on the money spent on Scalan, would have approved. As a result, in future the magazine will be sent to members in May and November, avoiding the Christmas rush.

Due to the poor health of several members of the Committee, only one meeting has been held since last year. Or and Mrs MacNamee of Elgin have agreed to join the Committee, the latter to help with membership and finance. Jane McEwan looked forward to a time when the restoration would be complete and there would be less need for a locally-based committee. There was some discussion of water damage to the toilet and the replanting of trees to mask the extension to the gable. A vote of thanks to John Watts for his book on Scalan was passed, and it was agreed to write to the Scots College Rome Association with congratulations on the quatercentenary.

- **The Annual Scalan Mass** is on Sunday 2 July at 4 p.m., when the preacher will be Mgr John McIntyre the former rector of both Blairs College and the Scots College Rome. At the AGM Mgr McIntyre drew attention to a book of which he is a co-author, an account of the Scots College Rome edited by Dr Raymond McCluskey of St Aloysius College, launched at a conference of the Scottish Catholic Historical Association in Glasgow City Chambers on 17 June. Dr Watts has agreed to make his book available at Scalan, and the other will no doubt also be on show: apparently the McCluskey book has important new information on Abbe Paul Macpherson, the best known of those students who travelled from Glenlivet to the Eternal City.

Bishop Hay at Aquhorties

One more extract from The Catholic Church in Scotland by the Rev. J. F. S. Cordon ends the story of Bishop Hay.

After the autumn of 1810 the progress of the Bishop's infirmities becomes too painful to follow minutely step by step. As the light of his intellect was more and more eclipsed, his strength of limb improved. In defiance of every entreaty he one day walked as far as Inverurie, remaining at the Inn all night. Next day he was decoyed back to the Seminary in a post-chaise, under pretence of going to Edinburgh. At last it became necessary to interpose force to keep him at home. One of the masters now reported that the Bishop had reached 'the state in which all who knew him had long desired to see him. His glimmering intelligence was completely extinct.' From this time he was watched by the older boys in rotation. He would sit listlessly in his room, sometimes taking up a book, sometimes opening his breviary, but his head would sink down again on his breast, and he relapsed into vacancy.

Interior habits of virtue

When the little timepiece over the fireplace struck the hour of twelve, and six in the evening, the old man, with the instinct of half a century's habit, would kneel down as if to repeat the *Angelus*; and sometimes would remain kneeling for quarter of an hour fingering the buttons of his cassock as though he were saying his beads. He went down to hear Mass every morning. At the time for Communion he walked up to the altar

rails and remained there for a while but, nobody taking any notice of him, he would return to his seat. His whole demeanour when in repose was pure and simple as a child's. He took his plain food as usual, eating sparingly of it as in former times. Those who watched him declared that his whole behaviour was full of edification to them, proving so evidently the strength of interior habits of virtue, thus to keep his conduct unblameable when his reason was no longer there to control it.

St Teresa's Day

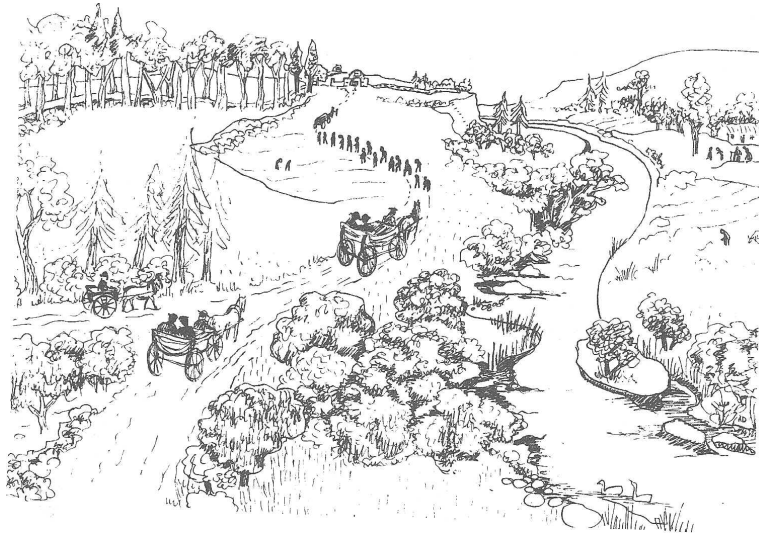
Thus time wore on till April 1811, when the Bishop was seized with alarming illness in the night. His danger appeared to be so imminent that he was anointed. Contrary to the expectation even of his physician, he rallied before morning and continued to improve, although the stupidity and torpor in his countenance was permanently increased after this attack. Bishop Hay passed the summer in his usual health externally, his mind totally eclipsed. At last the end arrived, on a day which had always been one of his favourite anniversaries, St Teresa's Day. For two or three days previously he had been rapidly failing in strength. Yet, until the day before the last, he was able to walk about a little.

In the afternoon of 14th October he was put to bed, and continued in a state of total insensibility till the end. Next day in the afternoon he was anointed by Mr James Sharp who, several years before, had exchanged his residence at Scaln for the new Seminary. Life ebbed gradually. The Bishop's last moments were tranquil, and he expired without a struggle at a quarter before six a' clock in the evening.

The Burial of Bishop Hay

In the pleasure grounds of Fetternear House a picturesque little burying-place of ancient date overhangs a steep bank round which the Don sweeps, the murmur of its waters at the dam a little lower down filling, without disturbing the quietness of, the sequestered spot. It was here, in the enclosure dedicated to the deceased members of the Leslie family, that they laid the remains of our Bishop. Since that time a new chapel has been erected there, and the Bishop's grave is now enclosed in the south transept of the building. Monday the 21st of October was the day of his funeral. The simple cortege consisted of a hearse, the Pitfodels carriage, and two postchaises.

The weather being fine, the company walked from the seminary to the churchyard. Of Protestant gentlemen there were present Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, Mr Gordon of Manar and Mr Harvey of Braco, with the ministers of Inverurie and of the Chapel of Garioch. Mr Menzies of Pitfodels was there and Mr John Reid [the priest who built Preshome and was then living retired in Aberdeen]. The boys of the seminary, dressed in mourning, followed the hearse. The company afterwards dined at the seminary, Mr Menzies presiding. Everything was over by 6 o'clock.



Ann Dean

Postscript

John Menzies later exchanged his Pitfodels estate outside Aberdeen for that of Blairs, which he gave to the Church as the setting for a seminary to replace Aquhorthies in 1829. The Rev. J. F. S. Gordon, writing in 1874, added a very personal comment to the above account: 'It is most dishonourable not only to the memory of this great Bishop but to the Catholic religion in Scotland, which he

may be said to have kept alive during a dismal period, that not so much as *a simple stone* marks his grave.' Sadly that is still the case.

Bishop Conti and the Scottish Catholic Heritage Commission have been giving consideration in recent years to how the grave can be made into a suitably dignified heritage site. Difficulties include problems of access and the partial dismantling of the 19th century chapel which was built over the Leslie mausoleum and is now unsafe. How did this situation arise? Copies are available on request of an article which appeared in the journal *Recusant History* under the title 'The Leslies of Balquhain and the burial of Bishop Hay' - authors Ann Dean (no illustrations on this occasion!) and Alasdair Roberts.

Ian Cordon Lindsay OBE 1906-1966: Architect

Elizabeth Beaton

Having noticed references in the last couple of issues to the architect Ian Gordon Lindsay who advised Fr David McRoberts that Scalán could be saved, I thought I might be able to contribute. Ian Lindsay trained at the Cambridge Architectural School. Thereafter he worked in Edinburgh as an apprentice with Reginald Fairlie, who was well known for his twenty-nine Catholic churches including Tayport, Fort William and Mallaig.

In 1931 Lindsay set up practice in Edinburgh as I. G. Lindsay & Partners, and worked on a wide range of buildings from castles, shooting lodges and churches to power stations and village houses. Whether for new or old buildings, his designs reveal great sympathy for both subject and setting. He knew Scottish buildings, both great and small, travelling widely around the country throughout his life sketching and absorbing the many different architectural styles. His approach to restoration was full of common sense: to leave the building with its original impact and within its tradition, yet fresh to start a new life of service. His new buildings had the same common sense approach, most designs drawing on Scottish architectural traditions without being slave to them.

Ecumenical

In church design and restoration his practice was ecumenical. Amongst his early projects was the Catholic church at Invergarry (1935), a simple crowstepped rectangle reminiscent of an 18th century Highland barn. He undertook the restoration of the Tynet chapel near Fochabers in 1951. Here the blue/grey inside paintwork is very much in his idiom, vitalising and enhancing the simple interior but in now way detracting from its character and purpose. In the same way the Hall Kirk at Livingston (1959) stands out as a dignified ecclesiastical and architectural point of reference. This plain white-harled building is long and low, with a gabled SW entrance porch and a square stumpy tower, its slated pyramidal roof conveying integrity and reassurance amidst the rawness of a new housing estate. His last work, dated 1968, was for the Episcopalian Cathedral of St John the Divine in Oban.

Ian Lindsay's two greatest restoration works were Inveraray town and castle and Iona Abbey, both in Argyll. He and his co-author Mary Cosh were responsible for the impressive and handsomely illustrated *Inveraray and the Dukes of Argyll*, published in 1973 some years after the architect's death. He had a special affection for Iona: the buildings and cloister which he grafted on to the ruins of the abbey founded in its first form by St Calumba - half restoration and half original design have great affinity to Iona and are as much at home on the site as the medieval work. His last wish that his ashes be scattered in the Sound of Iona was fulfilled, with a young assistant from his office piping a final farewell from the bows of the ferry-boat.

Lindsay and Scalán

In the 1930s Lindsay compiled a list of Scottish buildings of special interest to the National Trust for Scotland, and this formed the basis for the inventories of 'listed buildings' initiated by the 1947 Planning Act, for which Lindsay served as the first Principal Investigator. When the firm's Edinburgh office was closed in 1992 his papers, plans and drawings were deposited by his partner John Reid in the archive of the National Monuments Record, RCAHMS, Edinburgh.

It was typical that Lindsay should have felt Scalán was not beyond repair, and he would surely have approved of the recent restoration. There is a further link with Scalán. His nephew Donald Ian Findlay of Craigellachie (where his mother Ailsa lived until her recent death) was an ecclesiastical architectural historian working in London with the Council for Places of Worship. Donald, who never forgot his Banffshire roots, wrote a small book entitled *Banffshire Churches* which was published by the Banffshire Field Club in 1994 and reviewed, with illustrations, in Scalán News. He was a member of the Scalán Association until his sudden and untimely death two years ago.

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Peter Anson

In 1998 Kathy Moar of Mosstodloch wrote about Peter Anson, who was arguably the saviour of Scalán but is known more generally for his books and illustrations on fishing. This extract is taken from the community newsletter of Moray College in Elgin.

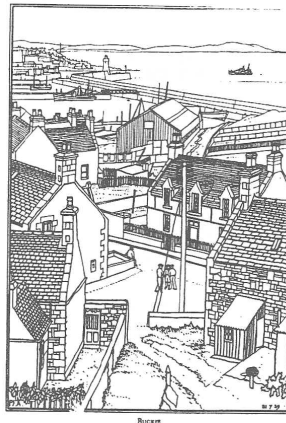
Peter Frederick Anson, Artist and Author (1889-1975).

Peter Anson might have been expected to follow his father into the Navy. While Peter was to choose a different path in life as an artist and author, the sea was nevertheless to be a lifelong interest. Last year Kathy Moar, a Diploma of Higher Education Fine Art student, discovered many of the exact spots where Peter had first sketched and painted everyday life in the fishing ports of the North East of Scotland in the early decades of this [last] century. Peter's paintings and line drawings have subsequently been recognised as a unique historical record of this era. As a project using photography, Kathy retraced Peter's steps 70 years later. A comparison of Kathy and Peter's work offers a poignant glimpse of the passing 20th Century.

Kathy says: 'The most rewarding part of the project was retracing Peter's route along the Moray coast. I met local people who were curious about what I was doing, scrambling up embankments and seeming to walk up and down the same piece of track with my camera. It meant a lot to me to show them his drawings and then talk about all the changes in their villages. Peter had originally painted this scene of Buckie in 1929. I felt very close to him by the end of project and just hoped I'd done him justice.'

The illustration which the newsletter reproduces in colour (contrasted with a black and white photograph of today) appeared as a line drawing in Anson's Fishing Boats and Fisher Folk on the East Coast of Scotland (1930). There is a website: www.moray.gov.uk/anson/ansonpag.htm. A Moray Council Museums Information Sheet adds the faith dimension:

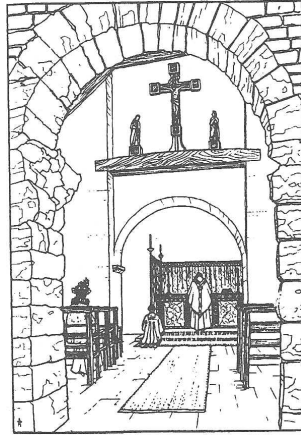
'In 1910 Anson joined the Anglican Benedictine community on Caldey Island off the Pembrokeshire coast. He was given the name of Richard. Throughout the rest of his devout and modest life he alternated between periods of religious contemplation and observing and recording life in fishing communities. In 1913 the monks of Caldey, including Anson, were received into the Roman Catholic Church. He co-founded the Apostleship of the Sea in 1921 and was its Organising Secretary for the first three years.'



From Scalán to Caldey Island

In his Caldey Island (1984) the author Roscoe Howells (who has some uncharitable things to say about Peter Anson) makes a number of references to the family of Charles McHardy, who came from the Clash of Scalán at the start of the old road to the Lecht.

Charles McHardy, who had worked at Fort Augustus Abbey, came down to Caldey in the May and started work on June 1st 1919 as farm bailiff. He was to work on Caldey and remain there almost to the end of his life. In 1938, after a period in hospital, he was taken by his old friends the Benedictines, who had left Caldey and removed to Prinknash [Gloucester, pronounced Prinnish]. He ended his days with them and that was where he was buried.



THE VILLAGE CHURCH. CALDEY ISLAND (1906)

Charles McHardy and his wife Mary had eight children and they were all on Caldey. Margaret the eldest daughter worked in the dairy. It must have been one of these sudden romantic Caldey affairs, for she married Richard - Cummins, an Irishman from Cork, in November after the McHardys arrived from Scotland. It was the first wedding in the chapel. He was there working on the farm, and new to the island after winning the Military Medal in the war as an artilleryman.

Dick moved into the Post Office with Margaret about 1926. They had seven children and all had connections with the island. Charles McHardy's grandson Andrew was steward at the guest house, St Philomena's, for many years with his wife Sally. Earlier, when the guest house was first transferred to the old Priory mansion, it was run by two of the McHardy girls, Veronica and Mary. Another sister Cecilia married Valentine Kilbride, a Bradford man who came to teach the monks weaving. They became engaged three weeks after their first meeting.

Typically there is more detail in Isobel Grant's Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet, starting with a reference to Charles McHardy's daughter Monica. She belonged to the arts and crafts community of Third Order Dominicans which grew up around the sculptor Eric Gill at Ditchling. As the late Fr Donald Grant O.Carm. noted in 1997, her daughter Jenny Kilbride remained there as a weaver until the community was finally wound up a few years ago.

Monica and Celia McHardy grew up at the Drovers above Scalan. I used to visit Monica in Ditchling Common near Brighton. Celia her sister married the weaver Val Kilbride. Monica married Bernard Brocklehurst, Val's partner in the weaving shop, but when the war came he had to move. Celia and Monica lived as children at the Drovers above Scalan and went to the Braes school along with their brothers and sisters. The Drovers belonged to McPhersons originally, and is also known as the Clash of Scalan. It was called that because of the old drove road for cattle which was the Whisky Road in smuggling times. Their mother was Mary Stuart of the Shop, so needless to say my godmother Lena Stuart was first cousin to Monica and Celia. I called on Monica in Wales when I stayed with her other sister Mary in Worcester some years ago. She always loved the letters I sent her with news of the Braes.

After the Drovers the McHardy family went down to Clashnoir Cottage opposite Springlea. Then they left the Braes and went to Fort Augustus, where the father worked on the Abbey farm. Then after that they went to Lord Lovat's farm at Beaulieu for a year before going to Caldey Island.



Celia and Val came back to Glenlivet during the last war for the sake of the children, first to Culantuim, then Tornnalienan because it was a larger house. Mam and I got Culantuim ready for them. I remember they had orange boxes with curtains round them for cupboards. All the houses just had hard wooden chairs to sit on in those days. After some time Celia found she was expecting a baby and wanted to go back south to be with her own doctor. Later still they came back to live at Tombae farmhouse.

At Christmas 1939, in the first year of the war, parishioners were told that no Midnight Mass would be possible at Chapel town because the windows in the church were not blacked out. However Val Kilbride asked a few other men to find a tall ladder, as the windows are very high, and they got it done - every window blacked out. Word got round that they could have Midnight Mass after all - news travels fast in the Braes. The other two churches had not blacked out theirs so more people came.

Stained Glass on Canna

Martin Farrelly

Martin is a highly experienced stainedglass worker who lives and works at St Margaret's Aboyne, where Mgr Sandy MacWilliam, one of the founders of the Scalan Association, ended his active career as a priest. Martin stayed a night at Bracara before sailing out to the linked islands of Canna and Sanday.

The tower of the church of St Edward the Confessor rose on the horizon as we neared the end of our three- hour voyage from Mallaig. Built to commemorate the Marquis of Bute who died in 1900, it is now being renovated as a study centre by Andrew McKerlich of Kyle of Lochalsh and his team including' Annie his wife who fed us magnificently. My assistant William would not always have been possible to bring a coracle north: Sanday lies directly in the Atlantic storm path, and recently a 140 m.p.h. hurricane lifted a house off its foundations.

The adaptation of the former St Edward's is now almost complete, and it will soon open as study centre with a particular focus on migrating birds. The exterior in basalt and / sandstone has been sensitively restored to look much as it did before. Inside there has been a huge .transformation but it still retains the ~character and ambience of a place of ~"~ worship. The nave, with its pews removed, is now the dining area linked to kitchen/study area and utility room. Upstairs is a new sleeping area with showers, and one bedroom has the restored rose window as its principal feature between two bunk-beds.

In Canna I met spiritual people, few in numbers but deeply aware of their heritage. My abiding memory of Sanday is of crossing the new footbridge and coming face to face with a see-through shrine to the Madonna in stained glass - the work of my predecessor at Pluscarden, Dom Ninian Sloan OSB. What a providential sign! Back at Aboyne a letter arrived from the architect in charge of the Adaptation Project. I opened it with some trepidation because I had taken some liberties in restoring the windows, but he described the work as excellent. There is talk of another stained glass project on Canna, linked with Bishop Ian Murray's first Confirmation on the island, so I hope to be back.

Stables drove from Deeside to Morar with our precious freight. Twenty windows and a rose window had been sent to Aboyne, where I restored old designs to new glass. Now they were coming back to the Small Isles.



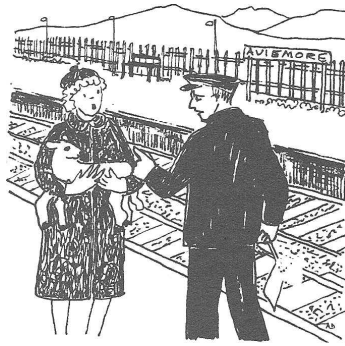
John Lorne Campbell, whose widow still presides over the finest Gaelic library in the Hebrides at Canna House, remarked in his book on the Isle of Canna that there is a 'palpable atmosphere' there. The Scottish Reformation never took root, and islanders trace a direct line back to St Columba whose own island of Iona lies directly to the south. It is very likely that he visited, and the one-armed Celtic cross which was shown in a previous *Scalan News* provides a link with these times. It

Two More Tales

Isobel Grant

The first of these was prompted by the arrival of a pet lamb (first of the flock). at Bracara in Morar The other would be even more worth including in a new edition of Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet.

Fred Matheson had a pet lamb at Scalan, but he was tired of it always coming to the door to be fed so Helena Turner was there and he gave it to her. Lena was friendly with Hamish Achdrignie, and he took her and the lamb to A viemore to catch the train. The station master said 'You're not taking the lamb on the train!'



Hamish didn't dare bring it home to his mother at Achdrignie, so he landed it back at Millbank. That was where my mother and stepfather went when George retired from the Bochel farm.

Mam was always taking children in and couldn't say no. She fed it on Marvel milk, so after a while it got too strong for her and my brother Charlie took it to the Bochel. A Polish couple were at Clashnoir Cottage, a house among the trees opposite the Bochel where Sandy Matheson has gone in winter recently when it's been too cold for him at the Scalan. They took the lamb down to Edinburgh in their car, but the neighbours didn't like the noise in the garden so back it came to Charlie.

When the Tomintoul sale came no one wanted to buy it except John Farquhar-son, but he had no field so he landed it to the Bochel again. After a few weeks he came over and said, 'I think it's big enough to eat now.' He got someone to kill it and never even offered Charlie a leg - he was rather cheeky that way, always having a joke, and of course they were first cousins. One time after October Devotions in the Braes Chapel George Bochel had a feeling it was going to be heavy rain next day. We wanted to secure the sheaves in the cornfield so we asked all the young lads at church would they come with us to the Bochel? They all came. Jack and Willie Robertson built the houacks [*Chambers's Scots Dialect Dictionary*, 'howick, hooick - a small rick in a field in a wet harvest'] and we all carried the sheaves around in circles. Much later, at three o'clock in the morning, we cheered as my mother and Meggie with her children (my nieces, the Turner girls) arrived with tea, plates and cups and a huge dumpling Mam had just made. We all sat down on sheaves and had a picnic - it was a lovely moonlit night. The neighbours must have thought the fairies had been at the Bochel when they saw all the houacks built up next day. George was right, for sure enough rain started to fall just before daybreak and it stayed on for the day.



Readers Write ...

... to *The Scotsman*, in the first letter:

With reference to J MacLennan's letter (20 April) may I once again correct the falsehoods about the Celtic Church. St Columbanus, writing to the Pope in the seventh century, stated: 'No schismatic was ever amongst us: but the Catholic faith as it was first delivered to us from you the successors, that is, of the holy apostles, is retained among us unchanged.'

St Jerome, a teacher of St Ninian, asserted that 'schismatics and heretics rend to shreds the seamless robe of Christ; therefore in matters of faith the chair of Peter must always be consulted' and 'those who do not gather with the Pope scatter.'

Hailing from the Catholic Braes of Glenlivet, my people stood firm as members of the auld holy 'Kirk in Scotland'.

James Cameron Stuart, Polmont.

Jimmie, whose people came from Auchavaich, has featured here almost as much as there and will be known to readers. In October 1997 I (AR/editor) began my talk to an Aberdeen University conference 'After Calumba, After Calvin' with the same ('triumphalist'?) message: 'My conference summary exaggerates in claiming that there have "always" been Catholics in North East Scotland. Clearly there were none before the arrival of Christian missionaries from South West Scotland and beyond, but seventy years ago Malcolm Hay of Seaton, across the wall from this university, demonstrated that there had been a "chain of error in Scottish history" based on a misinterpreted letter from St Columbanus of Bangor to Pope Gregory 1. Despite persistent assumptions to the contrary, those who came "after Calumba" were in full communion with Rome: even in its earliest Celtic phase the Abbey of Deer was as Catholic as the Abbey of Pluscarden is today.'

Jimmie and I have been drinking at the same well, although Fr Mark Dilworth, now (after Fort Augustus) the titular Abbot of Calumba's Iona, has pointed that in the same year (1927) as Hay's Chain of Error the same point ('ecumenical'?) was made by the Minister of Kilmuir Easter by the Cromarty Firth - the Rev. J C MacNaught, in The Celtic Church and the See of Peter. As the original letter which provoked CS shows, it has not yet been fully accepted. An old friend of Jimmie's, Ian Cameron, was at the Kirkie on the day of the AGM. He still looks capable of walking over the hills in search of his ancestors as described (poetically if not quite correctly) by Isobel Grant.

I am writing on behalf of Miss Ann Lamb to thank you for forwarding a copy of *Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet* to the hospital in Stonehaven. She is very happy about her own family memoirs and Larryvarry. Unfortunately her eyes have difficulty with the small print, so on Wednesdays when I visit I have been reading parts of the book to her. I have known Miss Lamb for some twenty years now. At the age of 97 she is still super, with good mental understanding, and we always have fun when I visit.

Bob Mitchell, Laurencekirk.

The next letter is a follow-up to one by Ann Dean a year ago, when she showed that the painting reproduced on the Scalan card (still available from Jane McEwan our Treasurer at £5 for six, bringing in £80 last year) could not have been done when the seminary still had students. She asked who the artist JK might have been, and may now have found out.

At the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh, there is a small water colour painting of *Glengairn* in the hall. A closer inspection of it shows the now familiar JK signature but no date. The painting is in its original frame; on the back is a label on which is written the subject of the painting, the price, and, interestingly, the name of the artist - *J. Keenan*. Steven Keenan (1804-62) became assistant priest to Dundee after studying at Aquhorties. His brother Peter (1811-43) studied at Blairs, was ordained at Edinburgh, and died at Greenock. Their father was James Keenan. Could he be the painter, or did these priests have a sister who, when visiting her brothers, enjoyed painting local Catholic views?

Ann Dean, Inch.

Thanks for sending me extra copies of the heritage brochure with its excellent map of sites, which went off to Morar MacDonell relatives scattered over the world. I shall take your advice and write to Bishop Conti's Secretary for more. *[These are available free of charge (but send money to cover postage to 3 Queen's Cross, Aberdeen AB15 4XU) to anyone who can make use of them.]* Yes, I have vivid memories of Wendy Wood when she had a croft at Glenuig and was writing *Moidart and Morar*. Have you seen her other two books about the area, *Mac's Croft* and *From a Highland Croft*? Also at that time (in the last war) Margaret Leigh was there and wrote *Spade among the Rushes*. She later converted to the Old Religion and became a nun.

Charles Francis, Dagenham.

The title of the last book was so evocative, at a time when our first sheep had to be buried, that my wife and I became fans of Margaret Leigh (this, her best book, is again in print thanks to Birlil171) and also visitors, past the former Highland seminary at Samalaman, to her now-deserted township of Smirisary.

The pamphlet *Historic Catholic Sites* set me off in search of an unfamiliar one, Kilfinnan near Invergarry where the first Vicar Apostolic of the Highland District is buried. The Celtic cross erected by Bishop Hugh MacDonald is near the roofless mausoleum housing the graves of three MacDbnells of Glengarry - dated 1699, 1791 and 1852. Also commemorated on the Bishop's stone is the Rev. Donald Walker. When Bishop Andrew Scott came north from Greenock for a visitation of the Highland part of the Western District in 1838, he was shocked to find that the young priest of the Glengarry district (born in South Uist) had just died.

John Dinwoody, Edinburgh.

What about the Rev. George Duncan, who, according to the pamphlet, 'daringly entered the prison at Carlisle in 1746 to bring the Sacraments to Jacobite prisoners awaiting execution'? Where is he buried?

The Achievement of Scalán

John Watts

The following extract from Scalán: The Forbidden College, 1716-1799 is how the last chapter ends.

In religion, it goes without saying, Scalán had - and has had since - a profound effect on its local community. As a college it was at different times that community's fellow outlaw, its focus of solidarity, its Mass centre, its symbol. And for a century-and-a-half after its closure it was held in fond memory by the local people, though largely forgotten elsewhere.

In the first half of the twentieth century writers such as Odo Blundell and Peter Anson did invaluable service in helping to revive the memory. Visitors began to seek out the old seminary again, among them the students of Slairs College, whose outings to the site from the 1960s onwards were organised to give them an insight into the conditions faced by an earlier generation of students, and to let them see their own vocations as part of an ongoing *tradition*. More recently still, through the efforts of the Scalán Association, the College has been rediscovered by a wider public. Restored by the *Association* as a monument and pilgrimage centre, it has again become a focus of pride, spirituality, and a sense of religious history, not only locally but nationally. It is now held in regard by many - and not alone by Catholics - as a precious part of Scottish heritage.

It would be fruitless, and in a sense idle, to attempt to gauge Scalán's 'success' in achieving the aims that its founders had for it. No doubt there were times when it might have taken in more students, and when the community fell below the number supposed to be 'academically viable'. Perhaps also it might have looked for a higher ordination rate among those whom it did admit. It was regrettable, if inevitable, that successive masters felt the need to spend such energy on making ends meet, and latterly such care holding onto the lease (for which reason the present work has dwelt on these issues).

It could and should have been given a higher priority as to resources, though the Mission was for most of the time constrained in these matters by circumstances largely beyond its control. Several of its masters felt quite bitter that they were not given the encouragement they needed, and certainly the seminary did not enjoy the wholehearted support under some bishops that it had received from Bishop Gordon. Apart from John Geddes, perhaps none of the bishops entirely understood the difficulties of its management until Bishop Hay experienced them for himself. And, with little room for manoeuvre, their choice of master was in a few cases less than *ideal*. This last circumstance was of more consequence than any other shortcomings because at Scalán, as in education everywhere, good practice and standards were ultimately a question of people. It is no coincidence that the seminary's most fruitful years - under John Geddes, John Paterson and George Hay - were periods when very special men were in charge.

Ironically, at the very time when it had attained a stability, a degree of comfort, a level of organisation and staffing, and a capacity to fulfil its original mission never possible before, the Church deemed it obsolete and ready for closure.

When the two Kirk ministers visited Scalán in 1760, at its very lowest ebb, they expressed surprise at the stir caused by a place that seemed of so little consequence, and this must have been the impression it gave throughout its early days. Had they returned in later years, even at the high-water mark of its fortunes and resources, these men of the Establishment would probably still have considered it a rather poor place compared to the seats of learning to which they were accustomed, and they would have been surprised to find it thriving, indeed still surviving at all, in its retreat among the hills.

And even today it is just such a feeling of surprise that most strikes the visitor, when he or she comes upon it for the first time. What an incongruous place for a college! Here was a house, dwarfed by the huge, intractable landscape, remote, poor and unobtrusive, not a part of respected society, indeed breaking the laws of respected society by its very existence, surviving at all only through dogged determination and courage. Its influence and achievement seem quite out of proportion. Whatever its shortcomings, and quite against the odds, it vindicated the original vision of its founder, and achieved as much as he and his successors could have hoped for, and more.

It is perhaps above all this quality of strength-in-weakness that has won the respect, admiration, and affection even of those who have no close affinity with its aims. And for those who share its ideals, and understand what a keystone it was in the survival and recovery of their Faith, it is remembered with love and, and mentioned - as Bishop Geddes predicted - with veneration. His judgement, with which we began Scalán's story, is a fitting place to end it.

Book Review

The following review of John Watts' book appeared in the magazine Open House for April 2000. The writer Danny Sullivan is a member of the Scalán Association.

I can still vividly recall visiting Scalán when a sixth former at Blairs in 1967. This annual visit by sixth formers had become one of the College's traditions though I do not recall being given the history of Scalán in great detail, just a romantic sense of its place in the history of Scottish Catholicism.

Now that I have a more sanguine view of Scottish Catholic history and also of contemporary Catholicism itself it was with wariness as well as interest that I approached John Watts' *Scalán*. I receive the Scalán newsletter which can be irritatingly triumphalist without

realising it, so I wondered if this would be the core of Watts' book. I am delighted to say this is far from the case.

Watts approaches the story of Scalán with a real eye for historical detail as well as an unerring eye for the humanity of those involved. Only near the end of the story does he wax in a slightly lyrical fashion. Indeed one of Watts' major achievements in this book is to broaden the perspective so that one has a real sense of general history alongside the particular Catholic story.

Here we have a picture of the post Reformation Catholic Church in Scotland, at times barely alive and yet peopled by some remarkable characters who had a dogged determination in the face of all kinds of odds. The chapter devoted to John Paterson and his leadership of the small community does real justice to his achievements. Great attention is paid to Bishop Gordon's rules for the community and Bishop Geddes emerges from the story with real distinction.

We discover that priests and people joined the '45 rebellion without a thought and often paid a high price for their commitment to the Jacobite cause. Interestingly, no one in Rome seemed to be suggesting that religion and politics did not mix. The relationship with the Church in Rome during the time of Scalán is well chronicled as is the relationship with the seminaries in France and Rome itself.

Reading this history of Scalán one recognises that there was not outright hostility to Catholics in Scotland. There was a level of high politics and power; but throughout its life Scalán co-existed with its neighbours fairly comfortably even when there was a garrison close by. The sheer hardness of life for all people in the highlands at that time is brought to life and this was a shared experience - not an example of martyr-like students.

Also evident is lack of coherence in the Church, with suspicion and mistrust between the highlands and the lowlands, and this spilled over into the politics of episcopal appointments. There was certainly a class distinction present which made it difficult for 'ordinary' boys to be accepted into the system. This arrogance was still present in my time at Blairs when in the summer term boys would be 'asked' not to return after the holidays because of how they were doing academically.

John Watts' book is a very good read and an excellent chronicle of Scalán's life but of Scottish Catholicism only up to a point. We have here a window on the male Catholic Church and at that the powerful males, though we can also recognise their very real faults and frailties. But we learn very little of the lives of ordinary Catholics - especially women - in terms of their faith and practice. Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* is a marvellous account of how the faith was practised by ordinary Catholics in pre-Reformation England. The history of Scalán misses this critical dimension and we see 'ordinary' Catholics as a group of people simply there to be administered to by the clergy. This is a gap that needs filling if our Catholic history is to be fully authentic.

Finally, John Watts' book by its very nature makes you want to ask if the story of struggle and determination was worth the effort. Does our history trap us in perpetuating myths or does it free us to be liberated in our sense of faith in and relationship with a living, compassionate God? Does our history teach us a sense of humility in our relationship with our fellow Christians and those of other faiths and none? One would have to say that in terms of the institutional Church in Scotland the answer would have to be that the jury is still out and likely to be for some time to be yet.

Danny Sullivan has been offered the freedom of these columns to say more about why he finds Scalán News "irritatingly triumphalist without realising it". Meanwhile the possibility of publishing extracts from an earlier Open House article, 'Catholic Heritage and History' by Alasdair Roberts is under consideration: it would show that, "irritatingly triumphalist" or not, very little that appears here does so

Tom Stuart

Tom Stuart, whose inquiries into the Buiternach Cemetery have featured in these columns, died last November. In occasional letters to the editor he used to specify the details of his great age, as in 883/4, so it is pleasing to record that he achieved nine decades - and all in the same place. According to the Aberdeen Press and Journal for 1 December 1999, "Tom Stuart lived all his life in the same house at Glenlivet on Speyside. Mr Stuart thought it was a record, although he was never able to verify it.

A joiner and undertaker, he was also the local sub-postmaster for 45 years. The house was bought by his father from the Glenlivet Estate for £300 in the 1880s. Mains electricity was not installed until 1948. A widower, Mr Stuart is survived by two daughters.' R.I. P.

The Blairs Museum

On 1 May 2000 a greatly-improved version of the old College museum, which a member of staff used to manage on one Saturday afternoon in four was formally opened by the President of the Pontifical Commission of the Heritage of the Church, Archbishop Marchisano. What follows is taken from the publicity for the day.

Blairs, on the South Deeside Road, Aberdeenshire, is well known to local people as a former school for Roman Catholic boys. But did you know that from the day it opened its doors to those first twenty boys in 1829 it has also been home to a collection of

important Catholic treasures?

The Collection

The Blairs Museum holds an internationally renowned collection of fine and decorative art, embroidered vestments and church plate. The most famous items are those relating to the House of Stewart. Because of the close links between the Jacobites and Catholicism in Scotland, items belonging to the Stewarts have been preserved at Blairs. As well as a magnificent portrait of the Old Pretender, James III, by the Italian artist Trevisani, we have personalia relating to that most romantic of rebels, Bonnie Prince Charlie - a ring with a lock of his hair, a silver snuffbox presented to one of his supporters, and a beautiful enameled watch featuring the portrait of his daughter, Charlotte, Duchess of Albany. We are also the proud guardians of the Memorial Portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, painted after her execution and saved from the mob at the French Revolution by being hidden up a chimney.

St Mary's College, Blairs

The Blairs Museum is housed in part of the complex of granite buildings which made up St Mary's College, Blairs. The College was founded in 1829 when a local Catholic laird, John Menzies of Pitfodels, donated his mansion house and an estate of 1000 acres to the Church. The house was converted into a school for Catholic boys and a seminary for those who had a vocation for the priesthood.

However this is really the middle of the story. Blairs was the last in a line of small 'secret seminaries' where young men had been educated for the priesthood in out of the way places in the Highlands and Islands. Boys began their education in Scotland, then went on to one of the Scots Colleges on the Continent to further their studies. Those who were completely trained in Scotland were affectionately known as 'Heather Priests'.

These Colleges all had collections of fine and decorative art which found their way to Blairs. For example, during the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, the Scots college in Paris, like other institutions associated with the Papacy, was suppressed and its property, library and treasures were threatened. Enterprising men managed to save the bulk of the library and fine portraits and vestments and ship them back to Scotland, where they were hidden until a safe place could be established both for them and those training for the priesthood. Other items were collected by the priests and bishops of the former Roman Catholic seminaries at Scalán, in the Braes of Glenlivet, and Auchorties, near Inverurie, from 1714 onwards.

Come and find out about these fine paintings and objects in the history of the Catholic Church in Scotland - its 'Survival and Revival'.

Open 1 May to 31 October, Friday to Monday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please call for details of admission charges. Groups welcome, by prior arrangement. The Museum is fully wheelchair accessible. Guided tours can be arranged within or outwith opening hours and season by prior arrangement with the curator.

Tel. 01224869424

Email curator@blairs.net

Website www.blairs.net

A glossy three-fold brochure, with a location map and coloured illustrations, is available free on request.

The 'Whisky Roads' Project

AndyWells

*Andy is the Head Ranger based at the Glenlivet Estate Office, Main Street, Tomintoul AB37 9EX. He asked for publicity for the Braes of Glenlivet booklet *Water of Life and a Breath of Fresh Air*, and the cover was used as a frontispiece in the December issue - but forgetting to 'give him as the man to write to or the price - which is a bargain SOp. Buy lots!*

Visitors to Glenlivet will now be able to follow in the footsteps of smugglers and cattle rustlers thanks to a project completed in April 2000. The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society and the Crown Estate, Glenlivet, have recently teamed up to signpost the long-distance footpaths radiating out over the hills from the Tomintoul/Glenlivet basin. Walkers will now find six routes marked with the Society's familiar green and white signs.



Some of these old routes are well known 'Whisky Roads' used 200 years ago by smugglers and their ponies, exporting illicit whisky out of sight of excise men, but historically they have also been used for generations as the main access routes from Glenlivet and Strathavon to Strathspey and Donside. Those going south, though missing from Haldane's *Drove Roads of Scotland*, served as cattle trails leading to the Falkirk Tryst.

We have signposted these ancient tracks at the point where they meet public roads. They complement the excellent network of other waymarked and cycling routes which the Crown Estate has already built up in the area over recent years. Walkers visiting the area can now enjoy one of the most highly developed and integrated footpath networks in the whole of Scotland. Members of the Scalán Association will be particularly interested in the 4-mile Scalán Walk/Braes Heritage trail (No. 2 of the original 10) which starts at the Eskemulloch car park:

'Level track to Scalán. Rougher beyond and may be muddy. Steady climb to the top of Tom Trumper which affords excellent views of the Braes of Glenlivet and the Cairngorms. A guide to the Heritage Trail is available from the Estate Information Centre in Tomintoul. Please do not use the top section of the path when shooting is in progress during the grouse season. The circular Scalán Walk remains open. Livestock may be present for most of the route.'

Three of the new 'Whisky Roads' start in Glenlivet. The first heads north over Suie to Glenfiddich or the Cabrach, starting from the Allanreid car park. The second goes up over the Ladder from Auchavaich and descends to Strathdon by Glen Nocht. The third, which is remembered locally as 'The Whisky Roady', passes Scalán and the Clash to come down near the Lecht Mine and the A939 from Cockbridge to Tomintoul. There is an information board at the Well of the Lecht car park and picnic site.

This is a working estate with a community that relies on farming, forestry and sporting activities to earn a living. It is also an area of countryside with a rich natural heritage, supporting a range of birds and animals which can be vulnerable to disturbance, particularly during the breeding season. Please obey any signs you see and take care to act accordingly. Motorised vehicles of any type are not permitted on the trails. Please remember the Country Code.



Five of eighteen walks in Cameron McNeish's Northern Scotland edition of Let's Walk There! are clustered around Cairngorm. An item from The Scotsman of 31 May 2000 points up a contrast between two areas scarcely 20 miles apart as the crow flies (above the River Avon).

In an effort to reverse the wear and tear on the network of hill paths throughout the region, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) yesterday announced the latest of a series of repair programmes. Work has now begun on the renovation of nearly two kilometres of paths in some of the most environmentally sensitive areas of the mountains.

Nearly £97,000 is being spent on the programme, which centres on the 3,500-acre Cairngorm Estate, owned by HIE, with Scottish National Heritage (SNH) contributing £24,000. Four rebuilding contracts have been awarded, two involving sections of the path up the Fiacail a Choire Chais, the ridge beside the main Cairngorm ski area, and two stretches of the path into Coire an Lochain. The work is a continuation of a repair programme started in 1985 ...

An estimated 90,000 people a year use the estate paths, bringing in millions of pounds to the local economy but also putting a strain on the path network. Last year a survey by the Cairngorm Partnership revealed that many of the paths across the entire mountain area were almost beyond repair. It estimated then that £7 million needs to be spent over the next five years, with some 42km of upland footpaths in a 'desperate' conditions and another 80km in a 'very badly damaged' state.

The long-term aim is to create a small network of sustainable paths maintained to a high standard. People will be encouraged to use this network and not spread out across a wider area, allowing some paths to regenerate and eventually disappear.

Back numbers of Scalán News, starting with the first issue, abound with references to this southern route to Scalán. Your editor has led groups across with the bagpipes (though never playing the whole way as rumour had it) including one party where the ages ranged from twelve to seventy-something. A moving letter came from a widow who made the trip with her husband in July 1996

Thanks for *Scalán News* - we always find it most interesting. I don't think we will ever forget our walk with you and your daughter and the French couple over the hills to Scalán. With sadness I have to tell you my husband Mac died of cancer in May 1999. Please pray for him at Scalán: it was a very special place for us. I have bought John Watts' book on Scalán and am enjoying it. Our son

Gilmour, who also crossed to Scalan that day, is now parish priest at St Ives in Cornwall.



Stella McOermott, Oroitwich Spa.

Mac, otherwise Hugh McDermott, was prayed for at Scalan.

The back cover compares the present situation, where the way down . to Scalan is a 'branch-line' of the main track to Culantuin, Calier and the 'Back Side' of the Braes, with the track as it was. As pilgrims have learned to their cost, the direct line across the shoulder of the hill is waist deep in heather on the Scalan side.

Jimmy Fitzpatrick, who crossed fro/1/ the Well of the Lecht (and back!) for the 1998 Annual Mass, says that t li ' relatively featureless Ladder Hills do not appeal to walkers, unlike the badly eroded Cairngorms. This offers a fresh challenge to Mairi Cook, Aberdeen's Diocesan Youth Officer, whose young people did so well filling potholes in the farm track which constitutes the northern route to Scalan. (Andy Wells sees the completion of that job as part of his future responsibility, by the way.) The challenge, which goes out to all who feel young in spirit is to get the Whisky Roady tramped back into place again. To misquote the Braes-visiting songwriter Hamish Henderson, The piper is weary .. '

