

No. 19, December 1999

'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 learned concerning them will be recorded with care ...' (Rev. John Geddes, Rector of Scalan 1762-65)

The Scalan Pilgrimage Mass on 3 July marked two hundred years since the seminary closed its doors to students. For chief celebrant, we were fortunate to have Archbishop Keith O'Brien who has fond memories of summer expeditions from Blairs College when he was Rector there. Over the years Fr Brian Halloran has been a regular attender of the Scalan Association's AGMs, finding it convenient to make the journey north on Tuesdays in June, but his duties as parish priest and student chaplain at St Andrews had hitherto prevented him coming up on the first Sunday of July. This year he was persuaded to do so, and the memory of his homily, declaimed in a powerful voice under a lowering sky, lingers in the minds of the large numbers who were there. His text follows Fr Eddie McGhee's personal recollections of the pilgrim way from Ayrshire.

Also present on the day, after a still longer journey from London, was Isobel Grant. Her *Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet* was advertised by flyer with the last issue and the level of orders prepublication was high enough to ensure the book came out in October as advertised. As compiler and one of the 'others' who supported Isobel in this venture I can reveal that not everything went according to plan. A centrefold photo of the 1897 congregation turned out to be impossible in a £6.99 b)Ok, so that Ann Dean's drawings' are the only form of illustration. Stuart Mitchell's maps, intended for the endpapers, are reduced to page size facing each other. And the publisher's choice for the cover of a photo showing Ben Rinnes in winter necessitated a hasty rewrite of the opening: 'The Braes of Glenlivet lie beyond Ben Rinnes ...' Still, people who have read the book seem to like it. It can be obtained post free from Birlinn Limited, 5 New Street, Edinburgh EH8 8BH, although a request to your local bookshop might get it on display for the sake of others.

John Watts' book, *Scalan: the Forbidden College, 1716-1799*, did not come out in summer as promised in the last issue but, as another flyer indicates, it is available now. The back-cover map, linked to the final article, gives some idea of its riches. These two books complement each other very well with very little overlap - the one a lighthearted look at the life of the area and its people, the other a thoroughly wellwritten account of the seminary and the events which shaped it in the 18th century. The fact that John has already been presented to members as a historical novelist (and again quoted as such on p. 19) should be sufficient guarantee against dullness. All book-buyers with the aims of the Scalan Association at heart will want it on their shelves.

The illustration on the facing page is there to remind readers of a booklet about the Braes which is based on the memories of local people including Sandy Matheson, Scalan, and Bill Grant of Nether Clashnoir. If anyone thinks that the Distillery is not suitable they

should consult John Watts for the 'aquavit pot' beside Scalan, with another at Eskiemulloch. The paper cover is to allow *Historic Catholic Sites*, given out to those who were there on 3 July, to reach everyone for the usual postage.

## The Road to Scalan

Fr Eddie McGhee

*Fr Eddie regularly makes the long journey from Saltcoats. He devoted the first part of his Scottish Catholic Observer column to it on Friday 9 July.*

As I set out for Scalan last Sunday morning I wondered if I was wasting my time. The interpreters of Nostradamus and his prophetic utterances had informed us that the world was about to end that very day! As I crossed the Kingston Bridge, there making its way down the Clyde was the "W avey" bound for some exotic location on the west coast. Obviously the party on board were not too disturbed at the prospect of coming to a sudden end. The roadworks were still there on the M8 so no one had told them that the world was to end ... The world did not end, and the annual Scalan mass was celebrated by close on 300 people from all parts of Scotland.

I made better time than I anticipated on my journey up the A9, so I stopped and spent some time in the museum at Tomintoul. In one of the displays it makes reference to Scalan and the importance that it played in the life of the Catholic Church, pointing out that the Catholicism of the North East had very distinctive qualities. Looking at the situation of Scalan, hardness must have been one of them, but the display in the museum points out that neighbourliness was the other one. Perhaps because of the harshness of their environment, people looked after each other ...

It was with real joy that I encountered Canon John Symon who had also come to Scalan for the Mass. John tried to teach me history at Blairs almost 40 years ago, and then, as I progressed to Drygrange, he even tried to teach me philosophy. His outstanding contribution to all of us who shared part of our journey of Faith and formation with him was simply to be himself! We are all told that we are unique and spend much of our lives trying to be someone else. John Symon was and is uniquely himself, and it is probably no coincidence that he is an Aberdonian - a product of the Faith of the North East.

## Scalan Mass Homily

Fr Brian Halloran

In a time of religious apathy and indifference, the prophet Elijah went on pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of Horeb where God had given the Ten Commandments to Moses. There he encountered the Lord. Strengthened with his pilgrimage grace, Elijah went forth fortified and anointed Elisha to succeed him. Thus the line of prophets was to continue.

In a time when the priesthood is experiencing hard times, at least in regard to its numbers, we come in pilgrimage to an ancient shrine of priesthood - the seminary of Scalan. We come first of all in thanksgiving. In thanksgiving to God, who never deserted our cause but gave us a continuing line of priests, small indeed in number but very rich in courage.

### Dedication

Who cannot but admire their dedication amidst such deprivation? Today you look at this simple building that housed at times twelve students and two priests - without any running water, gas or electricity - without the kitchen facilities we now consider essential. They washed in the burn, and an outside spring was their source of drinking water. And yet you are now looking at Scalan IV, the last and most luxurious of them all.

The first Scalan was but a turf dwelling. The name Scalan means 'hut' (probably why it is often called 'the Scalan') the hut in which John Cordon Cairnborrow found some shelter in times of persecution. Here George Innes came in 1716 or 1717 with a couple of his students after the seminary at Loch Morar was destroyed as a reprisal for the 'Fifteen Jacobite Rising. And yet this turf dwelling was to serve as a seminary for over twenty years, housing ten students in 1720 and twelve in 1726. Here were ordained the first students since the Reformation who had pursued all their studies in Scotland, George Cordon and Hugh Macdonald (later Highland bishop) both ordained on the Ember Saturday of September 1725.

### Humble Buildings

A new stone building. was erected by Alexander Gordon of Coffurich in 1738 as Scalan 2. Alas, it was burnt to the ground on 16 May

1746 by the redcoats in the wake of the 'Forty-five Rising.

Undaunted, William Duthie (then rector) carried on and put up a rough turf building in 1747 - Scalán 3. It was the seminary for twenty years. Finally the turf dwelling was replaced by this building (without the attic floor which was added later) by John Geddes, later Bishop, and it was opened on St Andrew's Day 1767. This Scalán 4 served as a seminary until Bishop George Hay was able to move it to more commodious accommodation at Aquhorties in July 1799.

Today we give thanks - that is the first reason for our pilgrimage - for in these humble buildings a hundred priests were trained. Five bishops were students at Scalán. Within these walls priests were ordained, and two bishops were consecrated - Bishop George Hay in 1769 and Bishop Alexander Macdonald in 1780.

## **The Future**

But as we give thanks we also receive inspiration for the future. Today our land is in need' of good priests with perhaps a greater need than ever before, and yet our numbers are dropping. Indeed this is an age of lay apostolate, and thank God for the heroism and dedication of so many of our people. But let us not think that a priest is only for Mass and Sacraments while others do the rest. No, the New Testament priesthood is a prophetic priesthood: in it the roles of prophet and priest are conjoined. This prevents our ritual acts from becoming mechanical. Constantly we explain and expound their meaning; priests and people both need this dimension.

The Second Vatican Council stressed the preaching and pastoral role of the priest. The biggest threat in our present shortage is to that preaching and pastoral role. The apostolic laity need the ministerial priesthood to lead and nourish, and the more they become involved in the work of the Church the more they realise their need for true priests. Our present Holy Father has said:

'Laity and priests can never be resigned to see the number of priestly vocations and ordinations reduced, as is the case in many dioceses. This resignation would be a bad sign for the vitality of Christian people, and would put its future and its mission at risk. It would be ambiguous to organise the Christian communities as if they could very largely do without the priestly ministry, under the pretext of facing the future with realism. On the contrary, let us ask ourselves if we are doing all that is possible to awaken in the Christian people the awareness of the beauty and the necessity of the priesthood, to awaken vocations, to encourage them and bring them to maturity.'

To achieve this goal, may we see our faith as the pearl of great price, worth any sacrifice whatsoever, even of our lives or goods. Could we restore the custom of family prayer in every one of our homes? And may priests and people bind together in solidarity with a spirit of adventure and a willingness to give all to Christ.

## **Priests of Scalán**

Today we thank God for the courage of the past. We think perhaps of Bishop Hugh Macdonald who had to live in exile after the 'Forty-five, and when he returned to his native land was imprisoned and then condemned to perpetual banishment. After escape he had to live as a fugitive for the rest of his days.

Less well known but equally inspiring were the sufferings of another alumnus who began his seminary days at Scalán, Bishop James Grant. While he was priest in Barra, soldiers arrived who threatened to desolate the whole island if the priest was not surrendered. James Grant was in a safe haven, and his people would never have handed him over, but for their sake he surrendered himself and was taken in captivity to Mingarry Castle and thence to Inverness. There he was imprisoned in a room with thirty others, and chained by the leg to an Irish officer.

We thank God for all the priests of Scalán. Thanksgiving shows appreciation of God's gifts. Thanksgiving gives positive thinking. Thanksgiving will bring inspiration for the future.

## **Hidden in the Heather**

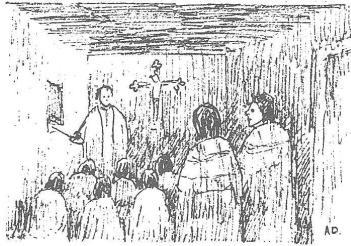
Mary McClune

*This is a shortened version of an article which appeared in the Scottish Catholic Observer on 9 July.*

Since the Reformation in 1560, the "Old Faith" had been gradually dying out. Those who defied the laws against Catholics did so at their peril. Most lived in remote parts of the Western Highlands, or in the lands of the powerful Catholic Duke of Gordon, which stretched from the North-east coast into the Grampians and included Glenlivet. Only a handful of priests served these vast areas: missionary priests, Jesuits or Irish Franciscans, and a few Scots from Scots colleges in Paris, Rome, Madrid or Douay, established

because seminaries were illegal in Scotland. The impoverished Scottish mission could ill afford the risk and expense of sending boys abroad, especially as some never did return. Many priests died young, broken by hardship and fear.

### The First Seminaries



The first Scottish Catholic bishops after the Reformation, Thomas Nicolson and his assistant James Gordon, a kinsman of the Duke, saw the need for places in Scotland where candidates for the priesthood could at least be given the equivalent of secondary education. Experimental "schools" where boys lived and studied in the home of a priest were tried. Such a school existed in Glenlivet in 1699, but when the priest moved it closed. A proper seminary was needed.

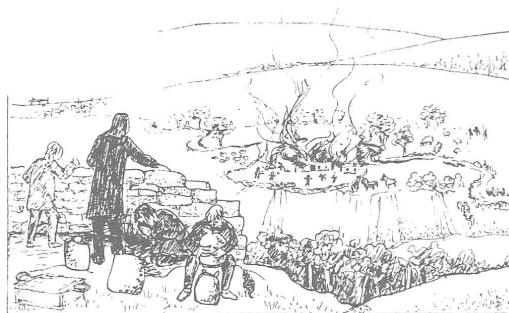
The first post-Reformation seminary, two turf huts on Eilean Ban, a small island in Loch Morar, was established in 1714. The island in the far west, in Catholic Clanranald country, was well chosen for its inaccessibility. Six boys and their tutor, a young priest Mr George Innes (for safety, all priests were known as "Mr") began their studies.

Like the Scottish Episcopalians, most Catholics supported the Jacobite cause. The failure of the 1715 Rebellion meant that government troops flooded into the Highlands. George Innes was forced to send the students home from Eilean Ban, but kept in touch with them in the hope of starting again. For the same reason, a priest living in the lower part of Glenlivet moved to a remote sheiling hut among farmers in the upper glen. Once settled, he built himself a house on a narrow shelf of ground on the west bank of the Crombie Burn. Bishop Gordon was quick to see in the new-built house, in remote Gordon country far from barracks and manse, a potential seminary.

### High Standards in the Heather

It is strange to look at tiny lonely Scalán today and think that some eighty to a hundred priests were trained there. The rules of the new seminary were strict. A boy would usually join at the age of twelve. Some would be sent to study abroad, others finished at Scalán and were ordained there. The seminary's educational standards were as good as schools like the Royal High School in Edinburgh, and philosophy and theology were on a par with that of the Scottish universities.

One of Scalán's best known students, and one of the first two "heather priests" to be trained entirely in Scotland, was Hugh MacDonald son of the laird of Morar. He had been one of Mr Innes's first students at Eilean Ban and came to Scalán aged eighteen. He was ordained at twenty-six, along with George Gordon of Fochabers, on Ember Saturday 1726. At thirty-two he was made bishop, in charge of Highland Catholics, leaving the North-east Lowlands to Bishop Gordon. In 1732 he reestablished Eilean Ban as a seminary for Gaelic-speaking boys.



### Three Raids on Scalán

Despite the secrecy, the Kirk's investigators knew of Scalan's existence. It was raided and burned by Hanoverian soldiers in 1726 and 1728. The priest and students took to the Ladder Hills carrying the Blessed Sacrament and anything else they could move. From a safe distance they watched the redcoats burn the thatched roof and knock down the walls of Scalan. The little community returned to rebuild the seminary, and to face a future of intermittent threat and harassment.

In 1728 the Duke of Gordon, Scalan's protector, died. His children were raised in the Protestant faith but remained helpful and sympathetic to the seminary. In 1738 a new building of stone and lime was erected. Bishop Gordon dearly loved the seminary which was his brainchild. When he died in 1746, he bequeathed all his possessions to it. Mercifully he did not live to hear of Prince Charlie's defeat at Culloden, a disaster for the Catholic Church in Scotland and for Scalan.

After Culloden, troops were once again posted in all Jacobite areas and this included Gordon country. Priests were imprisoned or went into hiding. Churches were destroyed. Mr William Duthie, the master of Scalan, was warned of a raid. He had enough time to disperse the boys, rescue books and furniture, take to the hills and watch helplessly as Cumberland's soldiers again torched Scalan.

Mr Duthie went into hiding, but returned under the noses of the redcoats and by 1747 had erected two primitive buildings. He recalled the students and taught by day, sleeping by night in barns and bothies, but he *was* needed to work abroad and an elderly unqualified man was appointed master. Scalan's very existence was on a knife edge. The new master could not maintain expected standards, and although Bishop Smith authorised better accommodation the number of students dwindled to three.

### **The Final Phase**

It was at this low point that John Geddes came as master. Within a year he had six students, by the next, eleven. By this time the redcoats were being withdrawn to fight in France, and life eased at Scalan. In 1762 Mr Geddes, a future bishop whom Robert Burns called "the finest Christian minister he had known", began rebuilding Scalan. The new Scalan was a solid two-storeyed stone house on the east bank of the Crombie. By the time it was finished John Geddes had moved on. His next achievement was to rescue and restore the Scots College in Spain.

Because Scalan lay on the border of the Highland and Lowland districts, for twenty years the bishops held annual meetings there, so they were well aware of the need for further expansion. In 1786 a spark from the chimney set fire to Scalan's thatched roof, presenting an opportunity to extend the building upwards and to add a new wing. No further building was done from that day to this.

*Mary McLune's article ended with the contribution of Bishop George Hay and his removal of the seminary to Aquahorthies in 1799. -*

## **Aquahorthies 200 Years On**

Anne Baxter

In the summer of 1799 Bishop Hay's flock left Scalan for its new home at Aquahorthies. It is known that the move was over some days but the route taken and the means of transport are a mystery. Did the parties go over the Lecht or along such roads as they existed between Glenlivet and Inverurie via Duff town? By horse and cart, or even on foot?

One hundred and seventy-five years later my husband Normile and I arrived with our four children, certainly by a speedier and easier mode of travel, and Aquahorthies has been our happy home ever since. When we bought the house we knew nothing of its history; gradually we began to learn something about it. First we had a telephone call from Canon - later Monsignor - Sandy MacWilliam who was then the parish priest of St Peter's in Aberdeen. This was followed by a visit in which he was joined by Canon Mackenzie from Huntly. Canon MacWilliam gave us a copy of his notes on the house.

### **Plate and Plaque**

Some months later Canon Mackenzie phoned in a state of excitement to say that he had found in his attic a box containing a brass plate commemorating the death of Bishop Hay. He immediately brought it over in his Ford Popular. I remember the day being particularly hot and reviving the poor Canon with copious draughts of lemonade. The plate is now in my husband's study, the room in which the Bishop died in 1811.

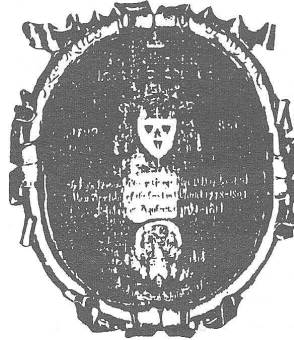
Dr Christine Johnson, who is the Keeper of the Columba House Archive in Edinburgh, provided us with a great deal of information when she was writing *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, 1789-1829*, and as a result of all these things our interest grew. Six years ago my husband designed a plaque commemorating the founding of the college in 1799, which was made and refined for us by the Aberdeen sculptors Anne and James Davidson. This is now in our Library (once the students' playroom) and it was unveiled by Bishop Conti as reported in *Sealan News* No.7.

### **Bicentenary Celebration**

For some years I have been on the Scalan Committee, and Normile and I pay frequent visits to Scalan itself. Episcopalian by upbringing, but now Presbyterians by attendance, we nevertheless feel deeply conscious of the historical and religious significance of Scalan and Aquahorthies, and it seemed fitting and necessary that the bicentenary of the move from one to the other in 1799 should be celebrated in some way.

We decided to give the house a birthday party.

Bishop Conti graciously agreed to celebrate Mass in the house and this took place on the appointed day. His concelebrants were Mgr Copland, Fr Joseph Toal, Fr Michael Briody, Fr Donald McKay and Canon Moran from nearby Inverurie. The original chapel at Aquahorthies is now the kitchen (and has been for many years) so was obviously an unsuitable place, but we managed to squeeze about forty people into our dining-room: Scalan Committee members, members of the Scalan Association personally known to us, some Catholic neighbours, and our family. The Mass was very moving and made a fitting start to the celebrations.



We had a marquee on the lawn and sat down 160 to lunch - piped in by Alasdair Roberts. Bishop Conti said Grace - in Latin which he said would have been used 200 years ago. We were joined by our friends: neighbours, and all those who have helped to care for and maintain the building over the last 25 years. We decorated the marquee with blown up photographs of Scalan and Aquahorthies, portraits of Bishop Hay and James Byres of Tonley the architect and also an Extract of the Aquahorthies Rules.

*Members of the Scalan Association who were present certainly approved of this grand occasion and sent their thankyou letters accordingly. As for Bishop Hay, consider what Marion Lochhead reported in The Scots Household in the Eighteenth Century:*



## SCALAN . AQUAHORTHIES

1716 -1799 1199 - 1999

It may interest you to know why we are celebrating

At each place-setting there was a brief account of the two seminaries and the reasons why we had decided on the celebrations - many of our guests being only vaguely aware of the historical background.

A tremendous downpour at the end failed to dampen anyone's spirits, and our grandchildren provided an umbrella service to the guests' cars. Later that evening our family had their younger friends for a dance, and the party went on far into the night. One of the most enthusiastic participants was a sixyear-old grandson who joined in every reel with his kilt flying until he was taken to his bed, thumb in mouth, at 2 a.m. One of our guests wrote afterwards that she felt that 'the dear old house, tranquil and beautiful, looked down benevolently on the celebrations.' We hope that Bishop Hay would have approved and given us his blessing.

*He loved the place, and the strength of his personality dwelt there even' when his mind had failed, even, it is said, long after his body had been laid to rest; for he has been seen in our own time blf those in the house, though it is no longij' in Catholic possession. Sometimes he is on the stairs, sometimes in the garden, alone, or with two priests.'*

## Bishop Hay at Aquhorties

*Further extracts from the Rev. J. F. S~Cordon's The Catholic Church in Scotland.*

On 20th October 1804 Bishop Hay sent to Bishop Cameron, his coadjutor in Edinburgh, a favourable account of the Seminary-Farm: they had had a delightful harvest and an abundant crop; everything was carried home. The boys and the masters were all well. He imagined that the dampness of his bedroom for two years past had affected his health. He had therefore had the walls of his room covered with laths and plastered anew. In those days in Scotland the plaster, even in good rooms and good houses, was laid on the walls without the intervention of anything to prevent the damp from percolating through.

Five nights later the aged Bishop was struck with palsy. He was unaware of what had occurred till he attempted to rise, when he felt his right side affected. He got out of bed into his chair, however, and managed to dress himself before Donald Carmichael the student who was to serve his Mass came to tell him that all was ready in the Sacristy. He was then hardly able to move or speak, and his countenance was much distorted. They put him to bed again immediately and sent for medical advice. Fr Carmichael when at Tomintoul recalled that, on going into the Bishop's room that morning to enquire for him, the old man raised his one hand and his eyes to Heaven with a look of resignation to the Divine Will, then stretched his hand out to the youth to shake.

#### Spanish Plaster

His mind was not in the least affected by the stroke. During the whole of the day he continued to be so much oppressed as to request, towards evening, that he might receive the Viaticum, fearing that later he might not be able to swallow. It was accordingly administered to him.

His medical adviser could recommend nothing except warmth and friction.

But the Bishop remembered hearing that anodyne plaster was used in Spain for paralytic affections, and had a large one applied to his loins. He passed a good night and, encouraged by the success of the plaster, he applied it to his head and those parts of his limbs most affected. His strong constitution slowly rallied, and by 30th October he was able to dress himself, taking his food with sufficient appetite. His right side gradually recovered its power. Under God, he attributed his recovery to the Spanish Plaster.



Bishop Alexander Cameron

On December 17 the Rev. Charles Gordon visited Aquhorties to report on his new chapel at Aberdeen, and the invalid took advantage by dictating a letter to Bishop Cameron: 'I have tried two or three times to say my Office but I found so much difficulty, and so much pain in my head, that I have entirely given it up and recite the Rosary in place of it. On Sunday was eight days I made an effort to say Mass, but it cost me more than an hour to finish it. My head is so weak that any attention affects it much and breeds a great confusion in my mind. I am often seized with vertigos and fits of weakness, but I take a walk in the garden when the weather permits it.'

On March 9 Bishop Hay had so far recovered as to attempt a short letter to Bishop Cameron. The writing is sadly irregular and weak blundered, blotted and mis spelt, giving plain token of feebleness alike of hand and mind. Ten days later he employed the pen of the Rev. John Gordon of Tullochallum, the procurator, to request of Cardinal Erskine in Paris to be relieved of his official duties: 'He earnestly wishes to dedicate what remains of his time to this House of Aquhorties.'

The Bishop's memory and speech continued to fail. When he attempted to write he had to consult the dictionary five or six times for the same word. But while his mental powers decayed his physical strength rather improved. One day in October of this year he walked to Fetternear to see a workman who had been run over by a cart and severely bruised, returning to the Seminary in less than two hours. The boys gave him less cause for anxiety and the masters studied his comfort in every way, providing him with a bell, and with a double door for his room to shut out the noise more effectually.

#### **We reap the fruit of his labours**

A beautiful letter of Bishop Cameron's at this date evinces his anxiety that the aged Bishop should be as carefully tended as possible.

He addressed himself to the two John Gordons who made up the clergy staff: 'Rev. dear Gentlemen - I hope you will not take it amiss that I lay before you some reflections which I have much at heart. You will observe that Bishop Hay has lately given you a signal mark of his regard and affection in the foundation of a weekly Mass to be said by each of you.

'What I wished to insinuate was the propriety of your saying these Masses particularly in the B.'s room or doset when he permits it. It is natural and most just that you as well as I should look up to him. We are to remember



Bishop George Hay

that he is no longer capable of those exertions in which his health and strength have been exhausted. We reap the fruit of his labours. Let us avoid, as much as possible, everything which could disturb the tranquillity of his mind. Let him enjoy the evening of life and employ it only in preparing for Eternity.'

The same anxiety was shown by Bishop Cameron during his autumn visit to the Seminary. He gave two of the eldest students a written paper of directions as to their attendance on Bishop Hay. The Bishop, hearing of this paper, asked to see it and seemed pleased with it.

The youths then requested him to name certain times of the day when they might go to his room and see if he wanted anything. As long as the Bishop could walk about he bade them not to come to him too frequently. They urged the instructions given to them by Bishop Cameron, which they interpreted into an order to visit Bishop Hay five or six times a day. To this he entirely demurred, alleging that Bishop Cameron must have forgotten that he only had to touch the bell for the maid when he wanted anything. The youths dropped the subject for fear of annoying the Bishop but continued to visit him every day about noon, again at four o'clock, and again at seven - the master taking tea in his room at five. The Bishop at last limited their visits to one late in the evening, when he wanted a good book read to him.

### **Riding accident**

While Bishop Cameron was at the seminary he was invited as usual to accompany Bishop Hay to dine at Fettesmear. Bishop Hay rode on a little pony; and, happening to wave his hat to his companion who was on foot, the pony, being rather lively, took fright and threw the Bishop. The accident, though not serious, renewed a good deal of the pain occasioned by his fall at Aberlour a few years before by which several of his ribs had been dislocated. His mental affections and impeded speech were better one day and worse another. In October, on a good day, he dictated a minute account of the Studies and Routine at Aquhorthies to the new Prefect of Propaganda, Cardinal di Pietro.

As winter advanced he again suffered from the cold and the damp, but from his inveterate economy he kept the fire in his room low for fear of spending too much coal. Towards the close of the year 1807 the decay of the Bishop's mind evinced itself in new forms of caprice towards the master and students, at one time admitting one of them to his sole confidence and presently, for some fanciful reason, withdrawing it and taking another confidant. He would not permit anyone to accompany him on his walks. His last letter of this year consists of only a few lines, sadly scrawled, corrected, erased and blotted, with misspellings and incorrect idioms so unusual with him in his best days. Even this short scrawl cost him two hours hard work. The handwriting is strong and the signature good. That was the last thing to fail.

(to be continued)

### **Ian G. Lindsay**

Still more information has come to hand about the architect who advised against accepting the view of the Aberdeen builder Alexander Hall that Scalan was too far gone to be worth restoring. Ian Gordon Lindsay was at Trinity College Cambridge when his first book



*The Cathedrals of Scotland* was published by W. & R. Chambers at 339 High Street, Edinburgh, in 1926. Archbishop Beaton of St Andrews is in the frontispiece, and the author's positive view of him surprises: 'He was the famous cardinal who saved Scotland from the hands of Henry VIII and the ravages of unpatriotic nobles. A few suffered for heresy under Beaton, most notably George Wishart, a friend of many of the despicable plotters on the English side.'

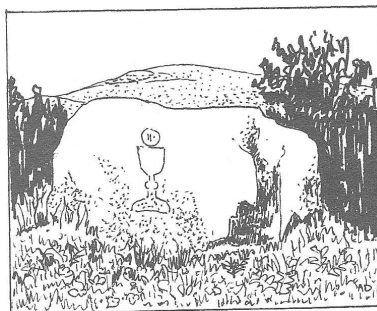
The book ends with nine pages of more or less complimentary discussion of the cathedrals of the Scottish Episcopal Church, followed by two pages on the 'not very interesting' ones of the Roman Catholic Church. Those of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee were condemned for being built at 'the bad period' of the early 19th century. Lindsay admired Aberdeen's high spire and nine bells, but not the inside which was 'spacious, but ugly'. Only at Oban, where the 'Tin Cathedral' paid for by the Marquess of Bute (with the idea of passing on three 'tin' churches to the poor Diocese of Argyll and the Isles) was there hope: 'This is made of iron and is quite as ugly as it could be. However it is only temporary, and the bishop is collecting money wherewith to build a new one which will probably be better than any of its sister cathedrals.'

The book was written in the rashness of youth, more than twenty years before he replied to Fr David McRoberts about the restoration of Scalán. From James Darragh's 1979 obituary of Mgr McRoberts it appears that he and Lindsay worked together during the former's time at the seminary of St Peter's Cardross, on the Clyde estuary: 'Perhaps the single event of his years at Cardross by which he would most wish to be remembered was the restoration of the fifteenth-century chapel of St Mahew ... Work was started in 1953 and carried out by Ian G. Lindsay, FRIBA, and Partners of Edinburgh and the restored chapel formally reopened by Archbishop Campbell on 22 May 1955. It was an act of *pietas* for all who shared in it; and the result was judged by at least one visitor, Cardinal Heenan of Westminster, to be the most beautiful chapel he had ever visited.

It sounds as if Cardross in Dumbartonshire would be worth a detour for our members in the West of Scotland. Ian Lindsay also provided an account of small Presbyterian places of worship in *The Scottish Parish Church*, published about 1960. It would be interesting to discover if the man who played such an important part in saving Scalán was himself a Catholic. Surely some of our older members must have known Ian Lindsay?

## The Holy Woman of Insh

*One of the Scalán Association's most loyal members, Ann MacDonell, died this year. RIP. Ann grew up at the head of Glen Ray, her father working as a gamekeeper in that remote spot. Ann's mother had been one of the brightest students ever to attend Notre Dame College in Glasgow where she trained as a teacher. Ann inherited love of her native braes and keen intelligence from both parents. In 1966 she collaborated with one of the founding fathers of the Scalán Association Fr David McRoberts to produce 'The Mass stones of Lochaber' for a special Highland edition of the Innes Review.*



*Twenty years later she was again a coauthor, (with Robert MacFarlane) of Cille Choirill, Brae Lochaber. From her home along the road at Spean Bridge Ann cherished the ancient church and its hilltop graveyard dedicated to Cairell, an Irishman who came to Scotland after Columille, otherwise St Calumba. She was able to channel the enthusiasm of Canadians and others with roots in the area for a restoration project not unlike the familiar one in Glenlivet. It has become a focus for annual pilgrimages too, with coaches coming from as far away as Cheshire.*

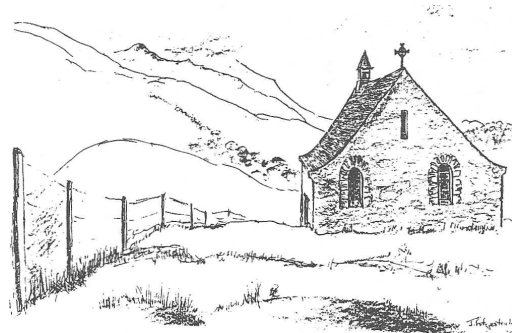
*Ann always had a particular devotion to the Holy Woman of Insh, close to Roybridge, who is buried at Cille Choirill. Early in the 18th century the priest Maighistir Iain MacDonald was about to leave the wild people of Lochaber to their Godless ignorance. His mood was not improved by a call-out to the sick bed of a woman in perfect health - and dressed in her finest attire. Second sight, and the ability to foretell the hour of her death, proved to be the explanation. She was dressed to honour the Eucharist brought by the priest, and to receive from him the Last Rites of the Church. Having unwillingly administered them, Maighistir Iain was astonished when the woman proceeded to die without sickness or pain. He stayed in Lochaber, and the area became devout. She turned to dust, except for her hands which were preserved in a position of prayer. Ann MacDonell's own account, based on her knowledge of local lore, follows.*

The Holy Woman lived on Insh ground at Achnafraschoille, near the entrance to the Lairig Leacach or "Stony Pass" which, pre road

and railway days, was the main route south from Lochaber. Today the ruins of about half a dozen houses mark the spot, but it is not known which was the Holy Woman's abode. Family tradition marks her as Mor Liath, "grey-haired Sarah" (MacNab) but a genealogy left by another member of the family, the late D. C. Macpherson the "Bohuntin Scholar", names Sarah's mother Catriona (Catherine) as the "saintess". In any case it would appear they were both known for their sanctity as the names Sarah and Catherine were perpetuated in each generation and branch of the family for over two hundred years.

Tradition again says that there were miracles and wholesale conversions after the Holy Woman's death. Her sister had always been a bedridden invalid. The Holy Woman told her of her imminent death and that, on entering God's presence, she would ask Him to cure the sufferer if she touched her dead body. The sister did this and was instantly and inexplicably cured, and made well enough to walk the six miles with the funeral to Cille Choiril!.

She was buried inside the church in the south-west corner behind the door. So impressed was Maighistir Iain M6r with these wonderful happenings in Brae Lochaber about 1721 that he wrote letters describing them to Rome. One of these was seen by the late Archbishop Donald Campbell of Bohuntin when he was a student there from 1914 to 1920, but subsequent efforts through correspondence and students have failed to locate them.



Cille Choiril Church, Lochaber,

with Stob Coire an Fhir Dhuibh and the ridge of Aonach Mor, by J. Fitzpatrick.

## Miracles

From *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief* (Harper Collins, 1999) by Joseph Pearce: 'e. 5. Lewis's *Miracles*, possibly his most important theological work, was published in May 1947. Four years before this Fr Ronald Knox had produced his own 'up-ta-date book about Miracles'. Although not as comprehensive in its scope as Lewis's book, Knox still made some powerful points. Discussing the alleged credulity of those who believed in miracles, he compared the restrained view of the Church with the dogmatic rejection by materialists of the possibility of miracles. The Church, wrote Knox, never maintains that a miracle is 'theologically certain; we only say that it is, so far, the best account we can give of the facts. We differ from our critics only in this, that we say, "It may be a miracle or it may not," whereas they say, "whatever it is, it certainly is not a miracle".'

## The Spanish Connection: putting Scalan on the Net

*In Aberdeen's Leopard Magazine for November an article caught the eye with its title 'The Spanish Connection' and two colour photographs of St Margaret's Huntly. The author Ran Smith recalled how the building had been a Masonic Lodge until its change of use in 1834, to become Scotland's first Catholic church with a bell-tower since the Reformation. Readers may recall the bells disturbing neighbours, from Mgr Copland's piece about the priest who did so much to improve St Thomas's Keith, Mgr Charles MacDonald of Achdregnie.*

*Ran Smith ends with half of a good story about Canon Lewis McWilliam. The missing part is that the Glenlivet man had included a painting of St Charles Borromeo as one of eight medallions around the octagonal walls, having been baptised at Tombae in the name of that saint. During the recent redecoration Canon Lewis (who died at Huntly as Scotland's oldest working priest) had him transformed into St Louis King of France by adding a crown. Somewhere in the middle of the article is basic information about the Gordons of Wardhouse who flourished through sherry and paid for the church, along with an altarpiece and other paintings.*

*The writer lost one reader's confidence by consistently using the spelling 'alter', but in any case readers of this magazine are in for a treat in the next issue when Mike Morrison (formerly of Huntly but now in Inverness) recounts the story of his search for 'the Spanish connection', including a meeting in his Jerez vineyards with the*

*marvellously named Manuel Gonzales Gordon Diez, Marques de Bonanza.*

*That explains half of the curious title. The other half is to do with something much bigger. Let Mike Morrison explain the proposal he put to the Heritage Committee of St Thomas's Deanery which met under the chairmanship of Mgr Copland on 27 October:*

The intention of the Scalan Trail Project is to create an Internet site that will allow the person accessing the site to find out about the historic Roman Catholic churches and other heritage buildings in North-east Scotland. The site was demonstrated in action. The title page which is the first thing to come on line has a brief statement and a picture of Scalan. The picture has 'hot spots' which link the user to each chapel or building, so that there is a sense of active learning from the start.

The two examples available for display at this stage are the churches at Huntly and Keith, both of which have special features and splendid booklets on which it has been possible to draw for information. In the case of Huntly there are further links within the text to additional items: colour photos of the interior, floor plans, and press articles including several on the Spanish Gordon connection.

To avoid a long down-load time I have made these small-scale so that the user can enlarge them by double clicking. Equally, the Microsoft advert provided through Geocities.com at the top banner on the page can be reduced to the level of invisibility! There is ample space for future development and it would be possible to move into the Internet section on 'Religion and Beliefs'. To view the present site key in <http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Court/4244/>

The demonstration prompted lively discussion and the response was extremely enthusiastic. Possible additional features included a message from the Bishop, biographies of clergy, inventories of items held in churches (some fear was expressed of the encouragement this might provide to thieves), a page for children and young people, general information on the history of the Deanery, an article (with diagrams) on the architecture of churches and chapels, and links to the Vatican and other significant Catholic sites on the Internet.

Some of the discussion focused on the possibility that St Thomas's Deanery might not be the best area for such a project. Arguments were put forward for the inclusion of Pluscarden, Inverness with its old church of St Joseph's, and even some of the churches north of Inverness like Marydale and Cannich. In the other direction it was pointed out that the former Blairs College near Aberdeen was to re-open as a museum early in 2000. Against this, it was agreed that a project could become too large, and the inclusion of Aberdeen (with churches of all ages, including St Machar's Cathedral and the Snow Kirk) would require a vast network.

The existence of the Scalan Association with over 650 members, and the accumulated information ('accessible' in the sense of dearly written) built up in 18 issues of *Scalan News* provides a very positive context. The title page of the magazine would be the obvious way to introduce users to the excellent drawings and articles on Scalan itself, as well as a range of items on linked heritage topics. David Macnamee's early 'The Chisholm Trail' from Fochabers to the island of Lismore by way of Scalan comes particularly to mind as a link between computer browsing and a true heritage 'trail' involving fresh air and exercise. At present the number of people with Internet access is still limited, and we have time to sort out the practical and protocol problems. Some time in the New Year, however, it should be possible to have this project up and running.

*There seems to be a further link between this exciting proposal which arrived out of the blue (Mike is a new member but he has consulted old newsletters) and the brochure Historic Catholic Sites. That target of 'a*

*thousand members by the year 2000' begins to look distinctly feasible.*



## Mass at Inverbeg

Fr Michael Hutson

On the morning of Sunday 29 August it was announced to the congregations in St Patrick's, Mallaig, and St Cumin's Morar, that the Mass at Inverbeg would go ahead - 'weather permitting'. The weather was very uncertain, with strong winds bringing showers from the south, but as 3 o'clock approached cars followed one another up the singletrack road to Bracarina. They were parked below the empty MacDonell croft house which served as a chapel between the closure of Inverbeg in 1832 and the opening of St Cumin's in

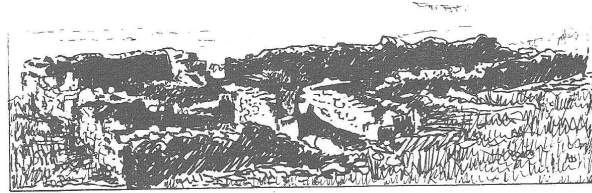
1889. Recent expeditions to our Holy Sites have used boats on Loch Morar, but this time the journey was completed on foot.

of Argyll and the Isles, the Church of St Columba', but then the heavens opened. Those who could find space huddled against the loch-facing wall and the others shared umbrellas - two golf ones for the altar.

Mindful of their labours up and down the waterways and mountain paths as far as Loch Arkaig, we prayed for the priests of former days including George Dalgligh, Hugh MacDonald, Angus MacLaughlin, Alex Paterson, Allan MacDonald, John MacDonald, John Tyrie, Angus MacGillis, William 'Hatmaker' Henderson and James Hugh MacDonald, who all had connections with Morar in the days of Eilean Ban, and for Ranald MacDonell whose church was at Inverbeg.

The service ended with a Gaelic song and the Latin hymn *Salve Regina*.

!



Astonishingly, considering the look of the sky, forty people gathered in the old roofless building of Inbhir Beag, the little bay on the south shore of the loch. We were dry during 'Be thou my vision' and the opening prayer which asked the Lord to 'look with love on this Diocese

Then, as sandwiches and other refreshments came out, so did the sun. *Regina Caeli* was played on the bagpipes which had accompanied a parish pilgrimage to Rome earlier in the summer. The piper stayed behind to play a piobaireachd for the 13th chief of Morar and Glengarry who died shortly before Ranald MacDonell began his 58-year mission to Morar based at Inverbeg and Bracarina. The 'Lament for Alasdair Ruadh' could still be heard as we came in sight of our cars. The rain had not dampened our enthusiasm, nor prevented us from continuing what has become a tradition in the Parish of Morar and Mallaig since 1996: the Annual Visitation of a Holy Site on historic Loch Morarside.

It was on 8 June of that year that we gathered for Mass on the Loch Morar island nearest to the present Morar Church. This was the same date that Captain Fergusson of HMS Furnace came to the island in search of the Prince in the heather who had been on the run since Culloden. He was also part of a purge throughout the West Highlands which was designed to render impotent all opportunities for further revolt. As far as we were aware, Mass had not been celebrated on Eilean Ban - site of the first post-Reformation seminary in Britain - since Fergusson's redcoats destroyed the buildings which included a chapel and Bishop MacDonald's house, his headquarters for the Highland District.

Neither redcoats nor rain were a problem when we made our way out to Eilean Ban exactly 250 years later, but midges were! A small fire was lit and fed with green leaves to make as much smoke as possible while the priests vested for Mass. Canon Roddy MacDonald wore the 1745 vestments which had been worn by a chaplain to Bonnie Prince Charlie, another MacDonald, and used the 1658 chalice which also belongs to Morar Church. Over 60 people took part that year along with Fr James MacNeil of Barra, the previous parish priest, and myself.

The following year, partly under the inspiration of John Watts' book *A Cairn of Small Stones*, we gathered at the Mass Rock at Brinacory, further up the Loch. John read a passage from the book describing an imaginary wedding which might have place there in the 18th century: 'Out side Donald Bracarina was tuning his pipes, passing to and fro across the door - the drones were like twin lambs without a mother to him for all the care he took with them. When at last he deign'd to make a start Peggy and I were piped out of the house ...' Our Mass included Latin hymns which might have been sung around Morar for centuries as well as some in Gaelic.

In 1998 we visited the ruined Masscentre or Tigh Phobuil of Romasaig at the head of Loch Morar for what was, once again, a beautiful celebration in a magnificent location. (In answer to that letter by John MacDonald in the summer issue, Wendy Wood obviously confused Romasaig with Inverbeg.) Next year we'll probably have Mass at Bracarina - or maybe Bourblach on Morar Bay where there was also a seminary in the 18th century. Revisiting the prayerplaces of our past helps us to appreciate the precious treasure which is our Faith. As we stand on the threshold of the new Millennium we hope it will encourage us to keep its flame burning brightly in Morar for many years to come.

Our Millenium Book costs £5 (incl. p.&p.) through Marion Gillies, Bracara, MORAR PH40 4PE, or 01687462135.

## A Great Priest

*In amongst Isobel Grant's Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet there are press cuttings from a collection made by Mairi Gordon, the last teacher at Chapeltown School. Here is another which was too religious for the book. It*

*appeared under the heading 'Glenlivet Remembers a Great Priest' in the Banff shire Journal for 18 August 1946.*

An interesting ceremony took place in the church of the Braes of Glenlivet on Sunday last, when a tablet was unveiled to the memory of Abbe Paul Macpherson, the founder of the Mission of Chapeltown, the centenary of whose death occurs this year. After a sermon in which Fr David McRoberts of St Peter's College Bearsden told of the work and achievement of the Abbe, with particular reference to his benefactions to Glenlivet, the memorial tablet was unveiled by Fr Peter Bonnyman of St Mary's Glasgow, President of the Scalán Association, which Association has now secured the old college of Scalán nearby where he received his early education. The memorial which was designed by Hew Lorimer of Edinburgh reads as follows:

**Remember**  
**the Abbe Paul Macpherson a great priest who in his days pleased God.**  
**Founder of this Mission of Chapeltown**  
**Who died 90 years**  
**24 November 1846.**  
**Erected by the people of his**  
**native glen in the hundredth anniversary of his death.**

The evening's ceremony ended with Solemn Benediction at which Fr John Matheson D.D. was celebrant, Fr Kennedy of Tomintoul deacon, Fr Charles Craigen of Maryhill sub-deacon, and Fr MacWilliam the parish priest was assistant priest.

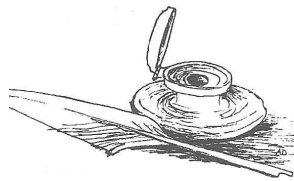
*The following extract gives a taste of John Watts' Scalán: the Forbidden College 1716-1799 at the point when the present Scalán was about to be built on the right bank of the Crombie. It follows on nicely from Stuart Mitchell's 'Settlement of the Braes' in the summer issue, with its cameos from William Anderson's survey. Map 7 on the back cover is one of nine in Dr Watts' book. He emphasises that it is a composite of two estate plans held at the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh, making it inaccurate by modern standards.*

## New Tacks

John Watts

The question of the lease had arisen because of the development of the land at the head of the Braes, and the granting of new tacks there, over the past three decades. A survey of the area carried out for the Duke of Gordon in 1761 provides details of the extent of these developments to date. Scalán, Badeglashan, Eskiemullach and Clash are all described in it as part of *lithe* New Land that is taken Inn to Corn Land off the Pasture And is not Incorporate with the old Plows But are in Seperate Tacks & Crofts". They had been progressively taken up and subdivided among local tenants.

Tack no. 4, 'the Scalán', included the Hill of Scalán itself and the land at its foot as far east as the Crombie and the Slochd burns, and that part of it not held by the seminary was now leased to a number of tenants - James Mcalea, Peter Stuart, Alexander Grant, Robert Rattray and Paul McPherson, who worked it in runrig. The Clash, which had formerly been a shieling belonging to Lettoch farm and used also by Calier, was now leased to Paul McPherson's brother John on condition that he cultivated it, and three acres were already under crops.



The survey also shows two plots on the east side of the burns. One was the land originally gifted to the seminary, which had never been part of a tack but inexplicably was now defined as part of Tack no. 4, belonging "to Scalán". The other lay immediately to the south and was described as a croft or pendicle of the Eskiemullach tack. Map 7 is based on the maps that accompanied the survey.

Traditionally, tenants' leases were short-term, or even renewed annually, in many parts of the Highlands, and were often bound by no written contract, so that security of tenure depended on the goodwill of the tacksman. His position was particularly powerful when land was in demand, as was the case with the recently improved lands on the Hill of Scalán. How would the tack be divided, when some tenants were seeking to increase their portion?

Grant of Rothmais had promised to continue all the existing leases, including that of the seminary, so long as he remained the tacksman. And although he was himself a Protestant he had always shown goodwill towards the College. But the rumour was that he planned to give up Tomnalienan, perhaps even that Whitsun. If so the other local tenants, and particularly the seminary's closest neighbour James Mcalea, had made it known that they intended to bid for the vacant land. Mcalea was likely to make a far less friendly tacksman. Fortunately, however, Rothmais decided to hold on to Tomnalienan meantime, in the knowledge that all the tacks on the Duke's estates would be coming up for renewal in several years' time, and that that would be his opportunity to make a move.

## Correspondence

Following a long period of transition, the editor has finally left Aberdeen. The new address is:

Alasdair Roberts 3 Bracara

MORAR PH40 4PE