



No. 24, May 2002

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)

**Once again** *Scalan News* comes to you in a paper cover because it contains two enclosures. The more important one is Fr Briody's report on last year's AGM, and the other is a flyer in support of the Blairs Museum. There may be new members who do not know that Blairs College near Aberdeen was the successor seminary, after Aquhorties, to Scalan.

**The Annual General Meeting** is on Tuesday 11 June, starting with a midday Mass at Scalan. The meeting itself will follow the usual excellent lunch to be provided in the Braes Hall. No doubt the event will proceed along familiar lines, but one very evident difference must be the absence of Mgr Copland who has been President of the Scalan Association for longer than any of us can remember. RIP. A Scalan-focused appreciation of him appears overleaf, but meanwhile two points are worth making: first, he died 'in harness', still working for us as well as his Keith parishioners; second, he brought the restoration of St Thomas' Keith to a successful conclusion, which should inspire us to finish the job that he has left for Scalan.

**The Annual Scalan Mass** will take place on Sunday 7 July at 4 p.m. when, as so often in the past, the chief celebrant will be Archbishop Mario Conti. This is an opportunity for the Scalan Association to congratulate him on his move out of the northern lands shown on the back of the magazine to a very different kind of responsibility. We are fortunate that the Archbishop, who has a formidable workload in Glasgow (after a joyous interlude celebrating his Silver Jubilee) is able to return to his former diocese on the first Sunday of July. That is due to the fact that Mgr Robert MacDonald of Inverness is celebrating his Golden Jubilee, along with Fr Ronnie Walls, now at Portsoy and twenty-five years a Roman Catholic clergyman. Not all members will know his story, in *The One True Kirk*, of being a Church of Scotland minister, becoming a Catholic (along with his wife) and then a priest after she was killed in a road accident.

**The Committee** is now chaired by Fr James Thomson of Banchory. Gordon McGillivray who farms near Chapeltown has joined it. Aileen Toft-MacNamee provides secretarial help to Jane McEwan, who remains the person (address below) to tell friends about joining the Scalan Association.

**The front page** is written last, so there is just space to thank once again the children of Lady Lovat School in Morar for packaging and posting. A story for them is on page 14. The facing picture illustrates several linked items between pages 10 and 13.

Mrs Jane McEwan, Ogilvie Cottage, Gallowhill, Glenlivet, BALLINDALLOCH AB37 9DL



St Mary's, Eskdale

### Mgr John Copland RIP

The President of the Scalan Association died on 6 February 2002 at the age of 81. The Requiem was at St Thomas' Church in Keith where Bishop Mario Conti, soon to depart for Glasgow, led the ceremony on behalf of his Vicar General. The eulogy was delivered by Fr Andrew Mann, Administrator of the Cathedral in Aberdeen, whose mother was a Grant of Upper Clashnoir. He quoted a press report of 1964: 'Portsoy's loss will be Braemar's gain. Portsoy will not readily forget the services to the church and community of this much loved

native of Tomnavoulin who had endeared himself to young and old by his selfless labours.'

Readers of *The Scotsman* were informed that 'John Copland was born and brought up on a croft at Tomnavoulin, in the Braes of Glenlivet, and educated nearby at Tombae School. His home lay only a couple of miles from Scalan, the seminary secretly established for trainee priests in the troublous times after the '45. Always destined for the priesthood, he attended Blairs College on Deeside and the Gregorian University in Rome before further study in Glasgow and London. . . He was buried on 12 February in Tombae Churchyard, a few hundred yards from where he was born.'

A touching detail appeared in the St Thomas' weekly bulletin prior to the Requiem Mass: 'Pall bearers: We require twelve men of the Parish to carry Monsignor's coffin.' Despite a long struggle with illness, Mgr Copland died as he wished, a working priest among his people.

Our Secretary-Treasurer Jane McEwan was there: 'As you can imagine the Church was packed and there was an overflow outside. Bishop Mario was the chief celebrant assisted by Bishop John Jukes and the Abbot of Pluscarden. The sanctuary was filled with priests including our own Fr Colin and Mgr McIntyre and Fr Briody. It was a very moving experience. The Parish had laid on two buses to take people to Tombae – one for Clergy and one for the laity. Fr Mann again did the needful. Thankfully the weather improved as we had snow in the morning. His sister Anna was unable to be there but a fair number of cousins turned up.'

## Old Time Religion

Peter F. Anson

*From A Roving Recluse (1946).*

Presbyterianism was the established form of belief. At the same time there happened to be isolated pockets of Catholics and Episcopalians in parts of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, each a proof of the conservative mentality of the people, who in the first instance had been opposed to any change of religion at the Reformation, and who, later on - at least in some districts - had preferred to adhere to Prelacy rather than adopt Presbyterianism in the 17th century. Nobody could accuse either the Papists or the 'Piskies' of being aggressive or militant. These remnants of religious systems discarded by the majority could not be regarded as Christian soldiers, marching as to war!

### Simple and Austere

There was something curiously attractive about this simple, austere and undemonstrative type of Catholicism. One might say that it contains the essentials without any superfluous trimmings. In the long run oatmeal porridge is more nourishing than cream-filled chocolate eclairs. . . In some parishes an interesting relic of bygone times is the recitation of the 'Prayers for the Intentions of Mass' before the one service on Sunday morning which usually takes

place at 11 o'clock. Almost unknown is the *Asperges*, i.e., the blessing of the congregation with holy water, carried out in nearly every church in other countries throughout the world.

*This is all the more curious for the fact that **The Catholic Directory for Scotland** and the **Ordo Recitandi for the Clergy**, were compiled at Blairs College.*

### **No Processions**

In few places does one find the prescribed processions on Candlemas Day, Palm Sunday and Corpus Christi. The Litanies of the Saints are not recited publicly on either the Feast of St Mark or on the three Rogation Days preceding Ascension Day; at least I have never come across these functions.

Perhaps it is feared that open-air services would stir up strife, but the Plymouth Brethren and Salvation Army boldly sing hymns and preach sermons in the streets of many towns on Sunday evenings in summer; admittedly with few or no persons listening to their efforts at evangelisation! The funeral services at the graveside are invariably performed by a priest wearing his ordinary clerical suit, the only mark of his office being a narrow stole round his neck. Unlike the Presbyterian minister, he does not usually add solemnity to the occasion by wearing a shiny lum hat! Yet the Episcopalian clergy are often courageous enough to walk through the streets at a funeral vested in cassock, surplice and purple stole - even with a biretta in some places!



## **Contrasting Cultures**

The Irish immigration which brought new life to the Church in the industrial towns and districts of the Lowlands of Scotland never reached the north-east. So the outward expression of religion has not been affected to any perceptible degree by the warm individualistic piety of the victims of the potato famine and of earlier and subsequent enforced exile from Ireland. These good people had to fight for the Faith when they settled in Scotland, whereas the Catholics in the north-east and in the Highlands had been fighting for three hundred years in peril of dungeon, fire and sword. When at last the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in 1829, they were more or less exhausted.

‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,’ St Paul wrote to Timothy. Such an epitaph might well have been cut on the tombstone of many a Scottish Catholic throughout the Penal Times. For the past hundred and sixteen years their children and grandchildren have asked nothing better than to be allowed to live in peace.

## **North-East Churches**

The churches themselves are an outward expression of the type of Christianity found in the Catholic remnant of the north-east. They are, almost without exception, kept in good repair and an example to those in many other countries so far as cleanliness, neatness and general adornment. Seldom occupied by a body of worshippers for more than an hour or two on Sundays, there is little chance of their showing signs of wear and tear. Most of them are as spick and span as are the drawing rooms or best parlours in the homes of the average well-to-do member of the congregation, and made use of about as often.

It would be rather embarrassing for a workman to turn up at Mass in dungarees. A beggar would feel conscious of his rags in such surroundings. The bare-footed urchins with their grubby hands and faces who are so completely at home in their Father’s House in Ireland would think twice before they dared run in and out of our churches.



In other words, a church is a building mainly used for Divine Worship once a week, not a spiritual refuge where, at any hour of the day, one brings all one's joys, hopes and sorrows, knowing full well that there is Somebody there who will understand what lies in the depth of the heart and soul. Except in the larger towns few people attend Mass on weekdays. It is quite common to find the priest's housekeeper as the solitary congregation, and taking the place of a server. The life of a priest in such a place can be a lonely one indeed. . .

### **North-East Clergy**

It would be difficult to find words in which to express my respect for the secular clergy of the Aberdeen diocese, most of whom have long since become personal friends. To be a mission priest in a small town or country district where almost every form of Catholic Action, apart from keeping a fatherly eye on a small, scattered, and often dwindling flock, is non-existent; to say Mass on week-days in an empty church; to live isolated and alone in the midst of a

Presbyterian majority, needs great faith and a heroic vocation. For positive opposition is infinitely easier to endure than negative indifference. To some of the younger priests I have in mind, the war was a blessing in disguise. It brought them new and untried fields of apostolate - among evacuee children, members of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and prisoners, both German and Italian. The accommodation of some of their little churches was taxed to the uttermost.

*Father Shaw welcomed Italian prisoners of war to Chapeltown, as Isobel Grant makes clear in **Tales of the Braes of Glenlivet**. Isobel is now away from London and living in Tomintoul. We wish her well: closer now to Comelybank and the Bochel.*

*Isobel is not the only famous member of the family. Her sister Jean McIrvine, who helps committee members at the Scalan Mass, featured in a recent issue of **Leopard**. She was photographed as part of a four-lady line up called *Blast from the Past*. They have been winning busking awards in Ireland: Bangor, Ballyshannon and Ballycastle, and this year off to the St Patrick's Day festival in Downpatrick. The entertainers come from Banff, Elgin and (in Jean's case) Largue near Forgue near Huntly. It is probably not Irish music that they blast out on guitars, mouth organs, spoons and what looks like a castanet in Jean's hand.*

*In the May issue there was a follow-up photo from Ireland, a solicitors' brass plate which they thought was a spoof but took a snap of anyway. The lawyers turned out to be correctly named as Argue and Phibbs!*

## George Hay's Conversion

George Scott-Moncrieff

*Anson's friend George Scott-Moncrieff was a convert, so his discussion of Bishop Hay's conversion is a suitable extract from **The Mirror and the Cross: Scotland and the Catholic Faith**. The book came out in 1960 when the Church of Scotland was celeb-rating the tercentenary of the Reformation.*

Hay himself had, in the usual way, been convinced that Catholicism was totally opposed to Christianity, until he first met some Catholics in the Prince's army, and later in prison in London. On his release he retired for a time to the country to avoid being called as a witness against his fellow Jacobites. Here he began to learn more of Catholic doctrine through reading and prayer, and entered a period of terrible misgiving. Back in Edinburgh he became on sufficiently friendly terms with his fencing master, John Gordon of Braes, to ask if he knew of any Catholics whom he might meet. John Gordon then confided that he was himself a Catholic. Fr John Seton S.J. was the priest in Edinburgh at the time and he instructed and received the young man.

*Could this fencing master have been one of Veronica Gordon Smith's forebears (see below) at Lettoch in the 'Braes' of Glenlivet? Lettoch became the area's Mass-centre after the closure of*



Scalan.

## Archbishop of Glasgow

*The Scalan Association has benefited over many years from the support of Bishop Mario Conti of Aberdeen, whose understanding of heritage has extended beyond high culture to humble buildings. His consecration as Archbishop of Glasgow may serve a number of objects, not least that of raising the Association's profile. One of our members, Veronica Gordon Smith, wrote a longer version of the following letter to **The Herald**.*

I was very moved to read your admirable editorial on the situation facing Archbishop Mario Conti as he begins his archiepiscopate in Glasgow. . . Your avoidance of the phrases "Scotland's most senior Roman Catholic", "leader of Scotland's Catholics", etc., neither of which are accurate, in favour of the much more perceptive and sympathetic phrase, "the most exposed Christian in the land" is most welcome and is undoubtedly true. As such Archbishop Conti will deserve all our support.

These first two phrases were indicative of a metropolitan outlook prevalent in the Scottish Catholic Church (and the media) that the churches of the central belt, especially Glasgow, being numerically greater, *were* the Catholic Church in Scotland. . . You rightly acknowledge the existence of indigenous strands of Catholic Christianity in Scotland (such as in my own area, Glenlivet) other than that found in the west, and you comment on the "tensions" between these two forms. I don't think it is tension: rather a lack of awareness of one group by the other. I have noticed during the debates of the last couple of years the almost complete lack of awareness among central belt Catholics of Highland Catholic traditions, and vice versa, including among many priests.

Some of my Presbyterian friends are more aware than many Catholics of the history of the eighteenth-century seminary at Scalan, in Glenlivet, whose priests served the Lowland Vicariate at great risk during the Penal Days and kept the Catholic Church in Scotland alive. And many of us Highlanders know little of the stories of the immigrant communities of Glasgow.

The Scottish Catholic Historical Association does sterling work academically in preserving this history but it needs to be more widely known. I am a Scots Catholic first, Roman Catholic second. I would like to hear sermons that draw on the spirit and bravery of my own people of the Braes of Glenlivet who protected their priests after Culloden. . . I always knew the extraordinary story of Glenlivet Catholics because it was oral. We now need to tell our stories more widely, because they make us who we are and demonstrate one of the strengths, not weakness, of the Scottish Catholic Church – its variety. . .

Your caption, "Mario Conti must help unite Scotland's Catholics", contradicts your encouraging anti-metropolitanism! It is not the task of a single bishop to "unite all Catholics", but to lead and look after the Catholics in his own diocese. As you rightly point out, Archbishop Conti's task in Glasgow is a very daunting one, to work to bring to an end Christian sectarianism. If he succeeds in that, Scotland and all Christians will have much to

thank him for.

## Readers Write

It was sad to learn of Stewart Mitchell's death in November's Scalán News. I knew that he was ill but understood from an earlier chat with him that there was hope. I suspect that I may have been the one who, some seven years ago, first told him about the Scalán Association. A query in the North-East Family History Society journal pointed to us having common Stuart/Smith/Thomson ancestors in the Braes of Glenlivet.

Stuart flooded me with information on north east genealogy. His letters were long and informative, as were his telephone calls. He never lost patience with my complete lack of understanding of modern information technology. Sadly I never made it to Turriff to meet him in person. I will now never get to the bottom of the question of aliases used by Glenlivet families in the 17th and early 19th centuries, which Stuart often referred to in our correspondence.

Monsignor Copland was another man who showed patience with a very amateur family historian. About two years ago whilst up in Banffshire looking for ancestral graves, I popped into St Thomas's in Keith and bumped into him. I asked him about Glenlivet names and he told me that I had written to him some years ago with the same question - and that he had sent back a detailed reply! On getting home to London I checked, and he was quite right. His memory must have been phenomenal.

Michael Olizar, Putney.

I have just come across your magazine which seems to specialise in old Highland churches. With the help of local people, I recently put together a book on *Arnisdale and Loch Hourn*, to the north of Loch Nevis. The Morar priest's visit to his Tarbert chapel was described (and drawn!) in your last issue. An old man who used to live at the head of Loch Hourn thought there was another Catholic chapel near the mouth:

'The origin of the little church at Barrisdale is not very clear. This church is close to the shore and the island graveyard of Eilean Choinnich (Kenneth's Island). It appears to be inter-denominational, may be associated with the graveyard, and was possibly built to serve the spiritual needs of the hordes of fishermen working on Loch Hourn and its shores over the many generations when the loch was famous for the bounty and quality of its herring.'

Peter English, Aberdeen.

*Can anyone help? The book is splendid value even at £20, as it is richly illustrated. More on Tarbert at p. 17.*

I wonder if you would permit me, an Englishman, to pay tribute to Bill Grant of Clashnoir. After all, I do have a Scottish surname and feel like an honorary Highlander after visiting Glenlivet and Shenval so many times. Last year I decided to find the remote Catholic cemetery at Buiternach, having visited most places connected with the Faith in north-east Scotland. I had been given directions on a previous visit, and again at my first Mass after arriving in the Braes.

But could I find it? Twice I tried, and both were thorough searches.

So - on my third and final Sunday, again at the Braes, I buttonholed Bill and his wife Irene in church after Mass. Even though I am partially deaf, and their soft Highland accents were a challenge, they persisted in ensuring that I knew where to look. Yes, I found it - remote, peaceful, beautiful. May all who sleep there truly rest in peace, as may Bill. Shortly after my return I heard that he was ill and then, sadly, news reached me of his death.

I live near Sherwood Forest. When parishioners at Tombae and the Braes see my 6' 4" frame they probably think I'm Little John! How I love to hear Father Stewart rolling his Rs - 'sins of the wor-r-r-rld!' Pity I can't understand a word of his homily! I'm over 400 miles away, but my thoughts are regularly with you.

John Stevenson, Southwell.

That was a very interesting article about the Torgyle chapel in Glenmoriston, but there seems to be some confusion about the 'Footsteps'. Unless I am much mistaken, the clergyman turning his back on the astonished congregation in Ann Dean's delightful illustration was not the Jesuit priest Alexander MacRae.



In his 1959 book *The Highlands* Calum Maclean writes: 'It was towards the end of last century that a noted lay preacher of the Free Church was conducting an open-air service at Torgyle. His name, I am told, was Finlay Munro. He was a huge and powerful man. In the course of his preaching he noticed that a couple of his listeners appeared to scoff at his teaching. He turned angrily to them and predicted that they would come to a violent and untimely end, an end such

as all scoffers merited. As a testimony to the truth of his prediction he said that the print of his two feet would remain for ever in the ground on which he stood.'

Two huge footprints are there all right - fifty yards from the road, and three inches into black earth among lush green grass. Calum Maclean was a contemporary of Hamish Henderson at the School of Scottish Studies and took a keen interest in traditions passed down. From a Highland Protestant background, Maclean was far from anti-Catholic. In the same chapter he praised priests who 'smiled benignly at their flock when they told stories, sang songs, danced and played the bagpipes and fiddle.'

Ronald MacDonald, Inverness.

## St Mary's Eskadale

Elizabeth Beaton

The article about the disused chapel at Torgyle made reference to the church of the Rev. Alexander McSwein (who went 'begging' to raise money for Torgyle) at Eskadale, 'otherwise Cannich, Strathglass'. This confuses two churches. Our Lady and St Bean at Cannich, where Mr McSwein was indeed based, is also known as Marydale. Eskadale is much further down Strathglass, only five miles short of Beaufort Castle. The church was built by the 14<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat in 1826.

The site is wooded and secluded. It is also distant from Beaully village which the Lovats founded in 1808. The village might be thought to have been a more appropriate place for their church, but no – the rural setting close to the river was chosen with a scattered, substantial congregation in mind. Beaully did not get its Catholic church until 1864 and Cannich was two years later.



Marydale, Strathglass, dated 25/6/32

Eskdale church is white harled, with contrasting dressed stone margins. It was designed in neo-Norman or Romanesque style by an architect who has yet to be identified. Unusual for its time, it is almost certainly the first Highland church to be built in this manner. The deep set round headed windows and main doorway have widely splayed margins.

The church is set in a graveyard which includes the burial enclosure of the Frasers of Lovat. Across the lane is the chapel house, although it is some time since there was a resident priest.

In contrast to the white exterior, the lofty aisled interior is painted in strong colours. The aisles are separated from the central nave by Romanesque round-arched arcades borne by robust round Norman pillars. Above the entrance is the Lovat gallery. The Chancel with its ornate reredos is of a later design by Peter Paul Pugin in 1881.

When St Mary's was built the worshippers came from a wide rural hinterland, many arriving on horseback. There are stables not far away with cobbled floor and tethering posts. Since there are no hay racks or mangers for feed it is obvious that it was intended for the temporary accommodation of horses while their riders were at Mass. These stables are a very

unusual survival. [*The Lovat coach-horses would no doubt have had their own place in the stable – see below.*]

I visited this remarkable church some years ago, on a warm spring day. The fields were green, the wild flowers flourishing, and the leaves were fresh on trees which sheltered the church and burying ground. Some members of the congregation had just completed the spring cleaning, and it was a fresh and refreshing sanctuary. Cleanliness is indeed next to Godliness, as the old saying goes. Eskadale was heaven that day.

## The Poisoned Priests

*Mgr Alexander MacWilliam, who helped to found the Scalan Association when he was at Chapelton, described Eskadale's greatest tragedy in a 1973 article for **The Innes Review**, the journal of the Scottish Catholic Historical Association.*

Angus Mackenzie was a native of Strathglass, its pastor from 1845 to 1856. Joseph Mitchell the surveyor writes of him in *Reminiscences of My Life in the Highlands*, 'Some twenty years ago there was a priest, a Mr Mackenzie, at Inverness, a superior and intelligent man. He frequently dined with me. He told me he was asked to move to Strathglass, on which I expressed my surprise that he should leave the charge he then held in Inverness, where he was so much esteemed, to bury himself amongst a rude and uncultivated peasantry. He said it was quite true, but priests were like soldiers, their duty was to go where their bishops ordered them. The bishop in this case [James Kyle] flatteringly told him it was important in the interests of the Church to have at the ear of a British peer an intelligent and sensible confessor and director, and as a favour he asked him to go, and he went.'

He died at dinner in Dingwall on 22 January 1856 where aconite root, which a servant had pulled in the garden, was served in mistake for radish. Three of the party died. It had been arranged to discuss the question of a church at Dingwall. As a result of this tragedy the Dingwall Catholics had to wait another fifty years for a church.

*Mgr MacWilliam does not identify the other priests who died. One was the Beaulieu priest James Gordon (1826-56) – can anyone help with the third poisoned priest?*

## Also on Eskadale

*Two volumes tumbled from the shelves: first Anson's **Caravan Pilgrim**. Three days before he had discovered Scalan.*

So on again to Lovat Bridge. We turned left here, crossing the river near the Falls of Kilmorack. On our right lay Eilean Aigas, at that time rented by Mr Compton Mackenzie who was making preparations to migrate to his new home on the Isle of Barra. We nearly lost the chimney on this road, for the branches of the trees hung down very low.

The sun was sinking down behind the mountains, the trees casting long shadows across the

road when we drew up beside the church at Eskadale. The beauty of the landscape was somewhat spoiled by the plague of midges from whose attack it was impossible to escape, except by shutting all the windows in the van or by smoking hard.

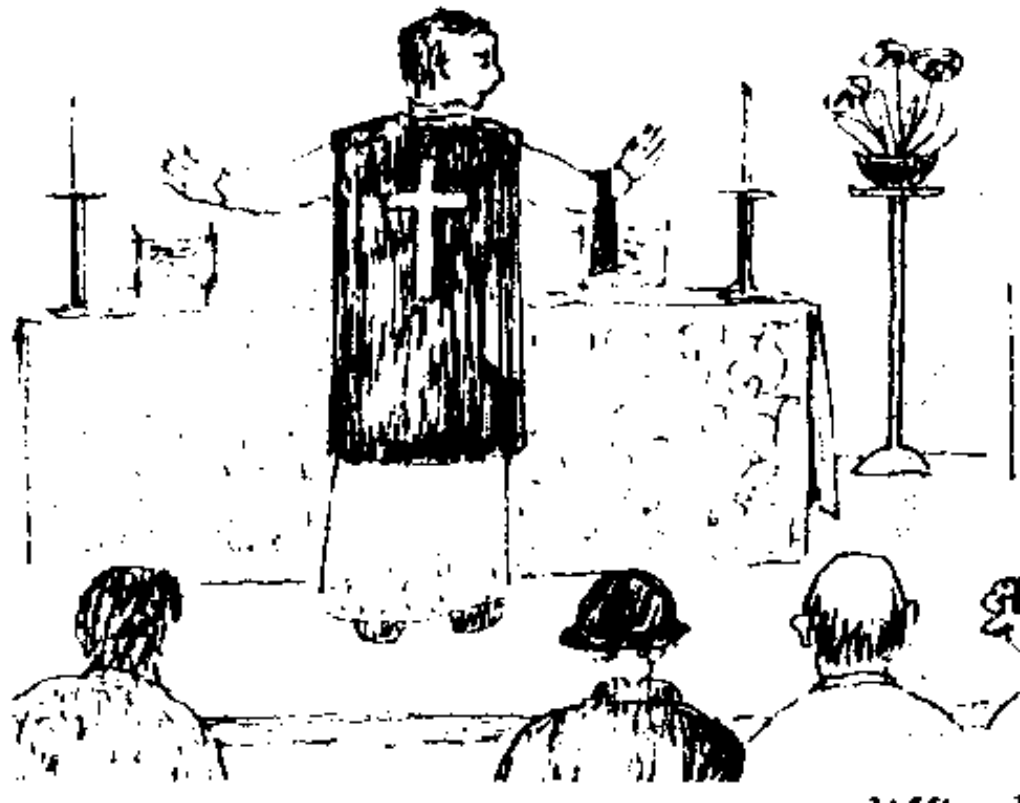
We spent a quiet weekend at Eskadale. The caravan was parked on the side of a road which led through the woods, and from our doorstep we could look out over the river. Neither Tony nor myself will forget the Highland welcome we received from Fr. Geddes, the kind and genial parish priest.

*Canon Aeneas Geddes (1882-1957) was a Macduff man who came to Eskadale from Stratherrick in 1918 and stayed 36 years. The obituary makes reference to 'his devoutness as a priest, coupled with great kindness and a warm sense of humour. Among his parishioners were Lord and Lady Lovat, and in their company he met a succession of people prominent in government, letters and industry. All were attracted by his simple dignity and charm of manner. He was an admirable preacher.' Unusually for a Scots priest, Canon Geddes was also 'an outstanding sportsman with rod and gun'.*

The present church at Eskadale was built by Lord Lovat in 1826 'on a scale of grandeur hitherto unknown in the Highlands', to quote a contemporary writer. I was surprised to see such massive 'Norman' columns separating the nave from the aisles, and must confess that I found the primitive low-backed benches more conducive to penance than comfort. Lord Lovat and his family are more fortunate than their dependants. They occupy armchairs in a raised pew at the back of the church as if to emphasise their exalted station in the social hierarchy.

The second book is *An Avenue of Ancestors* by Alice Constable Maxwell (1870-1958). She was a daughter of Simon 15th Lord Lovat and his wife the former Alice Weld-Blundell – yes, there is a link with the Fort Augustus monk.

On Sunday the family went to Eskadale by coach. At that time the Rev. Colin Grant (later Bishop of Aberdeen, and a scholar of the language) preached in Gaelic every second Sunday: 'When in Gaelic, we children would creep quietly out of the gallery and start walking home to be picked up later by the carriage.' No such escape was possible when the Lovats were holidaying on their West Highland estate:



‘The nearest church was at Bracara about three miles further along Loch Morar, and there we used to go by boat for Mass. There was no village, only some scattered houses nearby, but the little church was packed to overflowing on Sundays by all the people who came from miles around. A kind of pew was arranged for us on the gospel side of the altar, so we looked sideways at the body of the church, and for children who were inclined to giggle it was extremely difficult sometimes to keep a solemn face when something happened which seemed funny. The sermon was always in Gaelic and our padre’s repetitions of "as you see, my dear Brethren", in that tongue, were carefully counted and sometimes reached the high total of 45.’

## Eilean Ban, Lord Lovat

### and Prince Charlie

This follows on from ‘Lord Lovat at Eilean Ban’. You may remember how Bishop MacDonald’s house, which had been a small school or seminary for boys wanting to be priests, was destroyed after the battle of Culloden which took place on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1746. Scalan, the seminary in Glenlivet, was also burned to the ground. Most of the Jacobites who had gathered on the island escaped, but old Lord Lovat was taken to London, put on trial in Parliament Hall, and executed. You probably do remember that his headless ghost, dressed like a monk, was supposed to haunt the Tower of London.



New information is to hand. On 30<sup>th</sup> April two French ships anchored in Loch nan Uamh. Prince Charles had left that same loch four days before in an eight-oared boat, heading for the Outer Hebrides (although a storm was brewing) in hopes of taking a ship to France. While the French cargo of guns and gold for the Jacobite army was being put ashore, three young officers were given permission to stretch their legs. They walked up the track beside the Borrodale Burn and came down to Loch Morar at Scamadale. A MacDonald must have showed them the way (the walking is quite hard, though only four miles as the crow flies) and arranged for a boat to the White Island.

One of the officers, Guillaume Frogier, kept a diary. Most of the houses he saw were poor affairs made 'of clay or rough stone. Only the Bishop, at his house in Morar, had a garden.' Scalan also had a garden, for fruit not flowers. The Frenchman did not mention that two fine stone houses had been burned at Borrodale and Cross - and by the same Captain Fergusson of H. M. S. *Furnace* who came to Eilean Ban a month later. Frogier was very impressed by the Bishop's library which had 'two hundred books in Scots [Gaelic?], English, French, Greek and Latin'. He and his friends were delighted with the welcome they received from the Bishop's sister, 'a very pretty handsome lady'.

### **Captain Fergusson in Morar**

The second thing to add is Captain Fergusson's log, with dates:

'2<sup>nd</sup> June In company with the *Furnace* landed 300 men at Loch nen oa.

3<sup>rd</sup> June Our men marched over to Morar in pursuit of Lord Lovat. At 6 weighed [anchor] and worked out. In company the *Furnace* sent our booms [yard arms] on shore to carry our men to an island where Lord Lovat was informed to be. Landed two boats over the neck of land and got to the island but found them gone.

4<sup>th</sup> June Sent two boats up the loch and a party of men on each side under the command of Captain Fergusson in search of Lord Lovat.

5<sup>th</sup> June Came in several rebels and delivered up their arms.

8<sup>th</sup> June Captain Fergusson returned with Lord Lovat prisoner.'

This comes from *Ships of the '45* by John Gibson. He adds: 'London could scarcely have been more elated had Charles Edward himself been caught.' It was Captain Dugald Campbell of Acharossan, Loch Fyne, who arrested Lovat. Campbell had fought at Culloden along with his older brother, who was killed by a musket shot. The old man lay in two feather beds (like a sleeping-bag) and could not walk. The place used to be marked by a large hollow tree on a hillside called Druim a' Chuirn, beyond Meoble. Another silly story to be printed (it shows how excited Londoners were) was that Lord Lovat was dressed as a woman. There is a picture of redcoat soldiers bursting into a rather grand house, but it was kilted men of the Campbell Militia who made the arrest.

## **At Lord Lovat's House**

The day after Culloden, Lovat gave the Prince bread and wine at his house of Gortuleg by Loch Ness. He reminded the young man of Robert the Bruce, who lost eleven battles but won the twelfth at Bannockburn. Scotland's king changed his mind after watching a spider in the cave where he was hiding. It tried and tried again and finished the web. Charles refused to listen. His men had no food, money or ammunition, and he did not know there were French ships heading for Arisaig. That night Charles was wakened by footsteps, and jumped from the window to hide in a dried up well. It was only some children returning to Gortuleg, but Charles quickly said farewell to his host and set off for Lochaber. They never met again.

While the old man lay in the heather above Meoble, Charles was having a holiday in South Uist. He spent three weeks in a comfortable forester's house at Coradale, recovering his strength and watching out for French ships in the Minch. However it was British ships which brought men of the MacLeod Militia to search for him, starting with Barra. It was then, as every schoolchild knows, that Charles was introduced to Flora MacDonald. The Prince, not the Lord, put on woman's clothing: disguised as Flora's maid, he went 'over the sea to Skye'. A week later Charles left Elgol and landed at Little Mallack. Hard times lay ahead in Morar and Arisaig, but that is another story.

## **Hugh MacDonald:**

### **Highlander, Jacobite, Bishop**

*John Watts' latest book is about a man who links Glenlivet with Morar: he completed his education at Scalan and chose the island owned by his brother the laird for an episcopal residence – with garden. It is being published in July by the Edinburgh firm of John Donald at £14.99 for 320 pages, 16 with illustrations. Scalan News is first with a version of the blurb:*

This is the extraordinary story of a man who belonged to one of the most important families of the West Highlands – the MacDonalds of Morar – who played a part in the '45 (blessing the Prince's standard at Glenfinnan) and who, as the first Roman Catholic bishop of the Highlands, played a crucial role in the development of the Church, both in Scotland and the New World. The book explores connections and tensions between the three worlds of Highlander, Bishop and Jacobite.

As the first Scottish-trained Roman Catholic priest and the first Highland bishop since the Reformation, Hugh MacDonald was forced to run his diocese from a number of different places, and using a number of different aliases. For forty years he led his people through events which were to change the Highlands for ever – the first emigration to the New World, the first Clearances, the appalling aftermath to the Jacobite risings – all played out against a background of the seismic shifts that were taking place in Highland society. Hugh MacDonald's life began and ended amidst devastating famines, and took him from the remotest Hebrides to the Jacobite court in Paris, bringing him in contact with cardinals and bishops, chiefs and bards, saints and traitors.

As the first biography of this pivotal figure, and an important landmark in the religious history of Scotland, the book is also an exciting and moving story of a fascinating man in a time of persecution and disruption.

## A Lock of the Prince's Hair

A lock of Bonnie Prince Charlie's hair fetched £1,850 for the restoration of St Thomas' church in Keith, after Mgr Copland had it in his possession for fifty years. The framed lock was passed on to him in 1946 by Canon Andrew Grant when the newly ordained Fr Copland came to be his curate at St Peter's in the Castlegate. According to the *Press and Journal*, Canon Grant (a Braemar man) 'had received it from the Bruce family of Aberdeen through which it had been handed down from a Stuart connection.' Hilda Bruce was a teacher at St Peter's School for many years and it was her mother who passed on the Jacobite relic.

## Tarbert, Loch Nevis

*An inquiry about the Tarbert chapel came from Malta. The writer was unaware that Morar's new priest (already treasured) is Fr Joe Calleja from the George Cross Island by way of eighteen years in Pakistan; also that the owner of the North Morar estate (purchased from the Lovat family) is the musical-producing Sir Cameron Mackintosh. Maltese on his mother's side, he is building a new house near Tarbert on the ashes of the old. The inquiry was passed on to a member of the congregation.*

Nothing is on record about the beginnings of the Tarbert chapel, but it was there at the start of 1838 when the Rev. Coll MacColl was still trying to organise the seating in his unfinished chapel at Bracara, Loch Morar. Never named, as far as records show, the Bracara chapel had been founded the previous year with financial help from Lord Lovat, the Catholic owner of the estate. The priest ended a letter to Bishop Andrew Scott at Greenock in curious manner: 'Wood Cutters and Bark Peelers what am I to do with them unless I exact payment in Confession and give to the owners? They allow an inn at Tarbert near the Chapel there.'

From the casual way it is mentioned this suggests that there was a Tarbert chapel before the Bracara one was begun. If so it would have been served from Inverbeg, half a mile closer to Tarbert along the loch side, and by the Rev. Ranald MacDonald (1754-1840) who was living in retirement at Bracara.

Earlier in his letter MacColl wrote that 'Mr MacDonald of Finiskaig died. He was promising you any aid to the Chapel. I remember his saying he intended doing so with yourself – he would be a support to me.'

This MacDonald was a tacksman or leading tenant at the head of Loch Nevis. Attendance at Tarbert would have been convenient, and it is unlikely that he offered money for the already well-funded chapel at Bracara. The Loch Nevis side may have had nothing more substantial than what Paul Galbraith describes in *Blessed Morar* as 'Tighean-Phobuill (houses of the people)'. There was one at Romasaig on Loch Morar where 'the people would gather to

practise their faith, and receive the Sacraments from their priest whenever he managed to visit them.' Sixteen months later the Rev. William McIntosh, who was the bishop's vicar general at Arisaig, wrote: 'Mr Coll is busy enlarging his chapel at Tarbert.'



Confession has been linked with damage to trees: no doubt Mr Coll would have been told that it was against Canon Law to take money while granting absolution, although the penitent had a duty of making restitution.

One of 'the owners' who might have received compensation was Lord Lovat of the Morar estate; perhaps the Glengarry estate was also suffering from 'wood cutters and bark peelers'. Earlier there had been concern to protect Knoydart's pine trees from fishermen: 'Not only had nets to be dried frequently, they also had to be immersed in a protective solution to reduce bacterial damage and to protect the twine from wear and tear. Originally, the bark of trees was the only substance available. . .' In addition to living accommodation from summer to December at Tarbert, in other words, there had to be poles for and repairing nets and vats of tannin to preserve them.

# The Elusive JK

Ann Dean

*With additional news from Aberdeen, thanks to Betty McGee, Dorothy Green and (not least) David Lurie who with his wife Martine is a member of the Scalan Association.*

The puzzle over the identity of the artist whose initials are on the paintings of Scalan, Blairs, Aquhorthies and Glengairn was considered in nos. 18, 20 and 21 of *Scalan News*. Further research suggests that James Keenan of Aberdeen is the JK in question. He lived all his life in Aberdeen, dying at 14 Huntly Street (aged 88) in 1932.

*Together 14 and 16 Huntly Street make up the Cathedral Halls, at one time the Convent of the Immaculate Conception: 'The Religious teach the Girls' Day Schools, and have a School for Boarders and first-class day scholars at the Convent.' There must have been two flats with access from 14 Huntly Street, since the Street Directory shows George Hay, Tailor, as a householder there at the same time as James Keenan in 1929.*

His father was Redmond Keenan, spirit dealer, and his mother Jean MacDonald. In 1873 James married Mary Martin, a steam loom linen weaver, at the Catholic Church (not yet Cathedral) in Huntly Street. His occupation at that time was 'journeyman gilder'. Their family consisted of James, born 1875; Mary F., born 1877; twins John S. and Patrick, born 1880; Jane, born 1885; and Helen T., born 1889. At the 1891 census the family home was at 14 Kintore Place, and the householder James Keenan, now 46, described himself as a 'gilder, carver and flute player', self-employed.

*In the opening years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Street Directory shows James Keenan's business address as 193 Union Street, close to the Cathedral between Bridge Street and Crown Street. What did a gilder do, when not decorating churches? By 1912 his address (perhaps business and residence combined) was 55 St Swithin Street. James Keenan retired soon after in his late sixties.*

Mary died in 1941 aged 66, a spinster: members of the Cathedral congregation remember a Miss Keenan of Huntly Street playing the organ. Presumably she looked after her father at 14 Huntly Street and stayed on after his death. The name of her brother James, then at

‘Balgranah’, Milltimber, is on the death certificate. It has their father as ‘master gilder’. One of the twins seems to have died in the First World War, but there is some confusion over the name: John Keenan of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Scottish Rifles, killed in action in France, is surely the same man as Redmond Keenan whose name appears on the crucifix war memorial in Huntly Street. James’s father the spirit dealer was Redmond.

The other twin Patrick was a priest. He studied at Blairs, Paris and the Scots College Rome before becoming a curate at St Mary’s Inverness. After three years health problems brought him back to Aberdeen, where he was once more a curate at the Cathedral. In a career plagued by ill health (he died at Edinburgh in 1934) Fr Keenan’s longest period of effective priesthood was in charge of Sacred Heart, across the River Dee, between 1913 and 1928. During at least some of these years James Keenan lived in retirement with his son in Torry. If he was a widower by then, it is likely that Mary (the Cathedral organist) was housekeeper to father and brother.

Jane became a nun, entering the Order of Notre Dame as Sister Frances Julie. She died in 1956 at the Clerkhill Convent, Dumbarton, aged 71. Helen Theresa also became a Sister of Notre Dame. She died in 1983 aged 94 at 9 Victoria Circus, Glasgow (the Dowanhill Convent) as registered by a fellow sister in religion.

The oldest son James who lived at Milltimber in 1941 did not end his days in Scotland although he was 66 by then. If he was a family man he may have gone to live with a son or daughter in England or further afield. A descendant of this line might be able to provide more information on the ‘JK’ of the paintings.

Three of James Keenan’s children could have used the initials, but it seems reasonable to assume that the master gilder and carver was in fact JK. It is interesting to note that James Keenan, as flute player, used his musical talents on behalf of St Mary’s Cathedral. He took the lead in an Oratorio which raised £13 13s 8d for the peal of bells which was modernised for the Millennium. It is fitting that the painting of Scalan by JK is now available as an attractive card helping to raise funds for the restoration of the seminary. James Keenan would be delighted.



*With so much new information coming to light about this notable Aberdeen family, it will be no surprise if more turns up. The Scalan card which is partly - and inadequately - reproduced here can be obtained from Jane McEwan, price £5 per packet of six.*

### Spaniards at Walla'kirk

*The [booklet](#) which Ann Dean and Mike Morrison produced on the Spanish Gordons has now gone to a third edition, profits to the Scalan Association. Members were interviewed for **Leopard**:*

Mike Morrison's memories went back a long way: 'It all started when I was at Mass at St Margaret's in Huntly and wondered why on earth we were surrounded by Spanish religious paintings.' Jolyon and Sheila Robinson became involved as owners of Beldorney Castle, next to the old graveyard, and gave hospitality: 'We had never met before and our Spanish is pretty well non-existent, but it was a lot of fun and quite emotional at times. We all communicated in a mixture of English, French and Spanish, helped by the occasional dram and glass of sherry.' Mary Elizabeth Gordon Sanchiz, Marchioness of Pescara and Casa Saltillo, laid two bunches of flowers on her grand-father's restored grave. Speaking through her nephew Javier Martinez Sanchez, a member of the Spanish diplomatic service, the Marchioness, elegantly dressed in a

suit of dark green Gordon tartan, said: 'We have through generations retained the name of Gordon of Wardhouse. To renew our Scottish links through the marking of my grandfather's grave and the restoration of my family burying place has been deeply moving.'



## Endthoughts

Mike came up with the idea of a Scalan website some time ago. There may even be one, but your editor has still to 'visit' it. Despite the purchase of a new computer, he is so far still quite ignorant about the internet - though by no means against making use of technology. There was a course on desktop publishing in Mallaig, but the timing was wrong. One day this little magazine may be properly produced, perhaps by someone else - or a committee. Now that we are within sight of completing the restoration of Scalan (and paying for it) what does the future hold? The back cover map illustrates the 'wide-ranging' east-west ideas of this editor. It is taken (out of copyright, surely?) from Alphons Bellesheim's *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland*. What do you think?

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MAP  
ILLUSTRATING



# STATE OF CHURCH IN 1890

BISHOP'S SEES ..... ♂  
MISSIONS ..... ○  
DIOCESES INDICATED BY COLOUR

