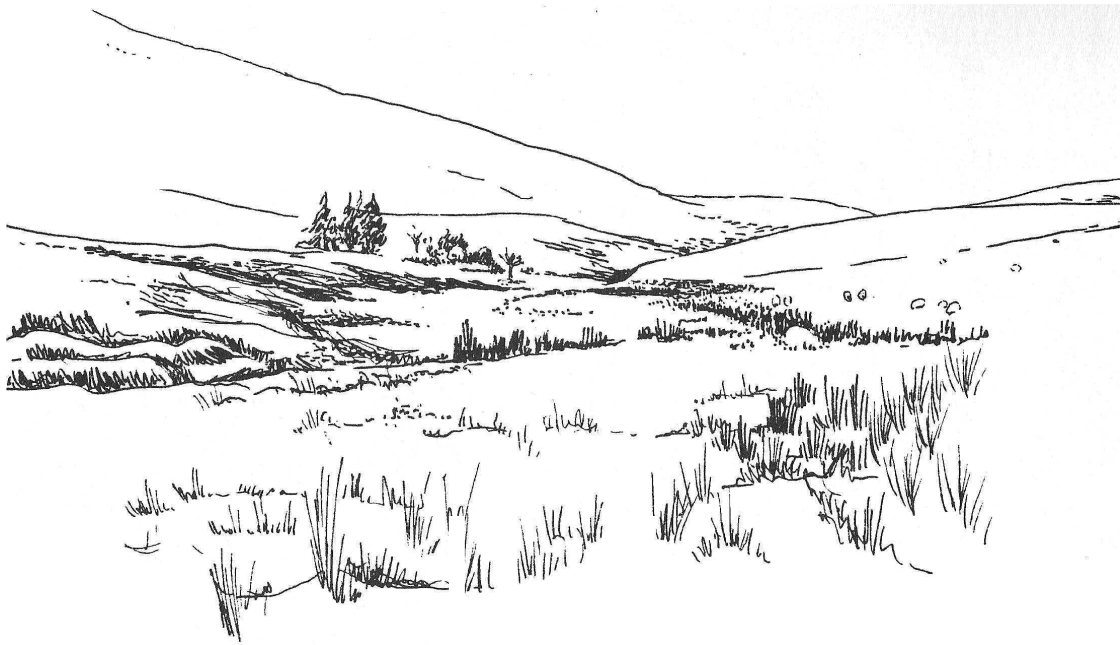




## ***news***

No. 6, June 1993

'The time by the goodness of God will come, when the Catholic religion will again flourish in Scotland; and then, when posterity shall enquire, with a laudable curiosity, by what means any sparks of the true faith were preserved in these dismal times of darkness and error, Scalan and the other colleges will be mentioned with veneration, and all that can be recorded concerning them will be recorded with care ...' (Rev. John Geddes, Rector of Scalan 1762-65)



## Editorial

Members will have recent memory of receiving last year's report from the AGM, along with a notice of this year's AGM on Tuesday 1 June. It is not a mass meeting, unlike the Scalan Pilgrimage Mass (4 July this year at 4.0' clock) because not many people can make it to the heart of the Braes by midday on a Tuesday. But for once your roving editor was able to pass his lecturing duties on to colleagues and get there just in time.

For me these journeys often turn into pilgrimages. Cutting short the explanation of why I cut it fine (but was not last) I left Aberdeen by south Deeside stopping at Balnacraig of the Innes family; Deecastle, the poorest mission in the north whose priest, Andrew Scott, went on to build St Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow; and Gairnshiel Lodge by the humped military bridge, which was erected to show the Catholics of Gairnside who was in charge after Culloden.

The road beyond Eskmulloch was exciting, the depth of its potholes concealed by muddy water on the day, but there were cars already at Scalan indicating that others were indoors weather, overcast but dry. I was ushered to a seat, as in a 'real' church, and took in the scene. Four priests were standing in silence, vested and ready, behind the table which served as an altar. The worshippers, two dozen or so, came within a yard of it. Above our heads, astonishingly, the rafters were visible through floorless joists, and I thought of cathedrals. Outside the larks sang. Mass began with a hymn, new to me, in praise of St Andrew: led by Mgr Copland's baritone, the sound was deeply male and suited the place.

After mass those of us who were so inclined poked about among work in progress, the boldest spirits venturing upstairs and across temporary planks. There, in the former chapel, I met John Watts, head teacher of St Kentigern's High School in Bathgate, who had also decided that Scalan was the real educational business of the day. His school has developed a regular outstation on the shores of Loch Morar, and the first thing that the youngsters generally do on arrival is take canoes out to the old seminary island. But the nature of Scalan and the possibilities of the St Michael Centre became clear to him during the course of the day.

I played 'Alba bheadarrach's mire ga'd fhagail dubh' (my pibroch number six, 'Beloved Scotland') round the walls, and then 'A ve Maria' in front of Sandy Matheson's cottage - peat reek from the lum, no Sandy - before following the others down to the Chapeltown public hall. This tinroofed building is quarter of a mile north of the chapel and, in the continuing absence of portaloos, the nearest toilet stop to Scalan. There we enjoyed the most marvellous three-course dinner. 'Lunch' does not describe it: a man at my table had three plates of Jane McEwan's leek-and-potato soup.

Before going over the page and into the AGM, please note that the drawing is Ann Dean's. It shows the view to Clash of Scalan, and the start of the old way south across the Lecht. Legend has it that bagpipes can be heard up there on Sunday afternoons in summer', whenever the mist is particularly thick. . .

## The AGM

It is not the editor's place to write a minute of the business conducted at this formally constituted meeting of the Scalan Association, but since the membership is approaching 400 and there is no chance of the majority ever attending an AGM this report may nevertheless be an appropriate item for the newsletter.

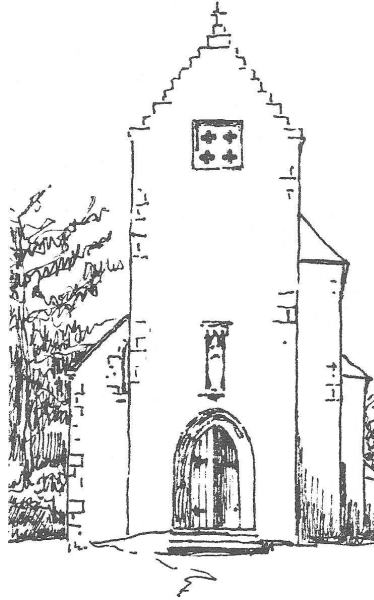
Make no mistake: although there was an after-dinner mood about the meeting (without toasts in Glenlivet, however) it is very important to be able to tell our funders that there was an AGM. And everything was done in due order. Apologies were read out from those who would have wished to be present. Last year's minutes were checked for accuracy and matters arising were discussed. Contributions were made through the chair, in the person of our President Mgr Copland. Jane McEwan presented a treasurer's report. Members will know her, on the basis of personal letters, as membership secretary: she deserves a plaque, inscribed in some lasting material by husband Bill - whose signwriting skills were acknowledged in the course of the meeting. At the end of an hour or so all the hard-working office holders were proposed for reelection and returned unanimously.

Although a member of the local committee (important for funders that it should be local) your editor is vague about finance, but the message is that the books are in balance. It may be worth mentioning, however, that a surprise bill well in excess of £200 had been charged for 'Scalan News' to be *photocopied* on the Aberdeen campus of the Northern College; future issues including this one will be produced on the Dundee campus of said college (formerly 'of education', now aspiring to a more general role in higher education) by cheaper offset litho.

Anne Baxter was there with her husband from Aquhorties, the farm near Kemnay which took the Scalan students and masters in 1799. She is an active member of committee, very good on 'contacts'. Members were interested to hear that a gentleman called Neil Gow will be coming up from Edinburgh, on behalf of *Historic Scotland* once the building work is complete, to advise on the next steps concerning the inside of the building.

Your editor was taking neither notes nor minutes, but among the points which stay in mind was a letter (read out) from Archbishop Keith O'Brien, a former Rector of Blairs, who gave his warm approval of how well things were going. He is a member: some other Scottish bishops get 'Scalan News' for nothing. There was much discussion on the state of the road and who might be responsible for it. Crown Estates, Calier (the nearest working farm) and the now-in-business bottlers of Glenlivet water were all mentioned. Estimates of how many loads of gravel might be needed ranged from 'a couple' to 400! The visiting head teacher (a new member) spoke about the abbey at Nunraw and the partly spiritual experience of helping to build it as a volunteer. The idea of a schoolchild *corvée* began to form in people's minds ... Members were reassured by the President that there was no plan to create the kind of metalised surface which would attract bus parties to Scalan. He made it clear, to general agreement, that 'a good farm road' would always be enough.

In general the impression which emerged from this meeting was one of satisfaction at the progress of the last year, linked with slight concern that the character of this remote seminary might be at risk if the news of its restoration became too well known. Under Any Other Business your editor put his personal view to the meeting that, while the funds of the Scalan Association should be earmarked for restoring the College building, its purpose should include the raising of interest in similar sites like Balnacraig, Oeecake and the nearby chapelhouse at Corgarff (visited on the return journey to Aberdeen). This broader 'heritage' aim was approved.



*The drawing of the local 'parish' church is included partly because it fits so well into a column. All the art work in this more pictorial 'Scalan News' is contributed by Insch-based gardens consultant Ann Dean. Her sense of the environment is obvious in what follows. The map on the back page goes with it.*

### Crofts of Scalan Ann Dean

The line of crofts above Chapeltown is a silent and haunting reminder of the families that once lived and worked in the Braes of Glenlivet. More than a hundred used to come down on a Sunday night for Benediction - 'down' from Seal an, Larryvarry, Auchavaich, Corrunich etc. Miss Annie Lamb, now in her nineties in Stonehaven, recalls sixty lums reeking in the Braes - 'all Catholic lums, except those of two gamekeepers (who were both well liked).' Soon there will be little left to show where the houses and their strips of land were.

There is a terrible poignancy about this row of abandoned crofts, their rowan trees still standing, their stone dykes, so laboriously built from the stones cleared by hand from the strips of land, slowly sinking back under the grass. The land drains, dug down by spade and lined with stones, must now be choked and broken as so much of the land is marshy. Each croft had its own spring, but these are now lost.

The Carrachs, planted over by the Forestry Commission, acts as a solid barrier where a hundred years ago it was criss-crossed by many paths. This was Larryvarry's common grazing for cows, one or two for each croft. Calves were sold to the bigger farms at about a week old. Crofters had neither horses nor sheep, but the farmers pastured their flocks on the hill. Sheep now graze over all the land from Scalan to Calier, leaving orHy thistles and nettles. Get rid of the sheep for five years and the land would be thick with rowan, birch, sycamore and willow, all self-seeded.

Annie Lamb was born at Newtown of Scalan and became a nurse straight from school at Chapeltown. Today her former home is a ruin. The barn section has a corrugated iron roof and all the gable intact. The house still boasts a chimney pot, and there is evidence of a more modern built-in fire at the left end. Unusually, there is a window beside the fire on the right gable wall. Some of the lintels on the windows are of wood - stone lintels were scarce and expensive - and there are traces of lime-plastering. Annie has fond memories of the wooden porch with two doors, one or the other used depending on wind direction - a boon in the blizzards of winter.

At one time there was a lovely garden at front and back, she recalls, but now it is just trees and thistles. The trees planted right round the house (too close, as they now threaten the walls) were given to Annie's father after he had completed the job of planting trees on an estate: it is possible that the surprising range of trees in the area stems from this. There are sycamore, ash, wych elm, rowan, birch, Scots fir, aspen and a huge reclining willow. Nibbled-down shoots of willow are everywhere. At the bottom of the croft land is a row of pine and aspen, and between this row and the buildings are traces of the layout of fields. Miss Lamb says they had two cows, calves, a pig, hens, and four ducks which laid their eggs in rushes in the Moss. After school the children had to find the eggs and drive the ducks home.

Greenbank is well below the main line of buildings at Larryvarry, nearer the Carrachs. Sandy Matheson can remember cutting the oats there with his binder. He thinks that John Sharp moved to Greenbank from the Clash of Scalan with his sister Maggie. The house is interesting, though the right chimney stack has fallen in which probably means that the gable will soon collapse. The interior is virtually complete, with fire-places, window frames (some hinged), flooring, woodpanelled walls and ceilings, box beds, double front

door, passage way with a recess for the water pail, wall presses and stairs up to the two bedrooms. In one of these, rather touchingly, an old decorative iron bedstead is still in place. The exterior walls have been lime-plastered, and a little bit of honeysuckle has escaped the attentions of sheep.

How did these families survive?

Life must have been hard, as the land, weather and altitude were rarely kind to them. For much of the summer there was work enough at home, but after the lucrative time of private whisky distilling ended work had to be found away from the crofts. In winter there was herding of sheep, fencing, draining; in spring ploughing on other people's farms. For certain experts mole catching brought in money. Then there was road making and mending, gamekeeping, forestry and seasonal work on the estates, including peatcutting for the distilleries. In summer, harvest work on lowland farms fitted in well with the later harvest of the Braes. The crofts of Scalan were slowly abandoned from the 1920s onward, until Fuerandearg, looking down on them all, was the only one left on the hill.

But Sandy Matheson is still very much in residence at Scalan. As far back as records go it was the summer sheiling for the farms of lower Glenlivet, but in 1791 Scalan became a farm in its own right. There must have been many more dwelling houses then, as the land was divided into two main farms and several crofts. According to the 1841 and 1851 census returns there were eight families at Scalan itself and over fifty people. The Crombie water was channelled off for working the two mills: la de and waterwheel can still be seen. Water provides Sandy Matheson with all the electric power he needs, and the Bishop's Well gives him a steady supply of clear, 'tasty' water.

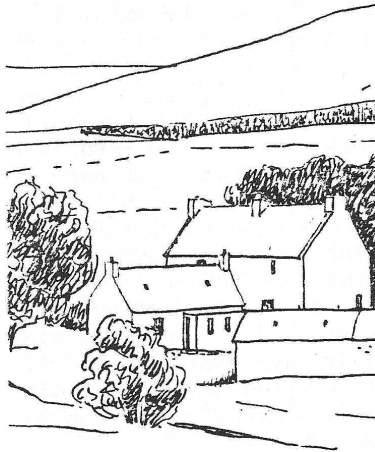
Bishop Geddes's new college was in the form of a square: on each side of the entrance gate was a stout wall with sheds on the inside. On the north and south sides were two long narrow wings. The north wing is thought to have contained the chapel: now a ruin, it was a later addition to the main buildings. The south wing has been part demolished. Sandy's house is no longer attached, and it projects at an angle well beyond the west boundary, the neat wooden paling fence of today. This south wing may actually be older than the central block, the demolished part serving as the original college kitchen.

In the 1800s Scalan was worked as two farms, and the former seminary became the house of the bigger farm. James Michie, who got a lease of one these farms, adopted his sister's two orphaned girls. John McGregor, son of an older sister, lived at Scalan; as most people had been in his parents' generation, McGregor was involved in whisky distilling along with his son James.

The chapel wing became a house and shoemaker's work shop in the latter part of the 19th century. Charles McHardie, shoemaker, died in 1913 and Henrietta McHardie was the last to live there, the roof still heather-thatched in 1926 when she moved down to Chapeltown. All the crofts were at one time thatched with heather, reckoned to last fifty years, although the college building enjoyed the status of a slate roof. Willie Stuart farmed at Scalan until 1931; Willie Lamb left in 1934, at which time the two farms became one and Easter Scalan got the two Scalan fields.

There is still a complete lime kiln, built in the days of intensive farming. Limestone was quarried off the hill in front called Tom of Scalan. The kiln was stacked with limestone, peat, wood and tar and kept burning for three days. The burnt limestone came out in hard blocks, was soaked for about three weeks, crushed and then put on the ground. The preparing of lime for mortar was also done locally the old building at Scalan still shows the rock-hard lime mortar. There is another 'lime kiln', according to the map first OS map of 1869, but broken bricks with regular holes in them suggest a drying kiln for the former corn mill.

While working in Sandy's house with his father one time, Tom Stuart found a fossilised bone from the back leg of a cow. In his *Wanderings in the Highlands of Banffshire and Aberdeenshire* (1881) J G Phillips noted that something similar, found in the the canachs at a depth of thirty feet, was in the possession of tile Rev. GJ Glennie, 'R. C. clergyman, Inverurie'. He may have brought it back to Scalan. Tom also did repairs at Tomnarieve. In tile space between tile top of a box bed and the ceiling he found a very old gun. No one had known about this weapon, which might have been hidden from the time of Culloden. ('Probably used to kill the three-legged cow', according to Tom).



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## Readers Write

*Last time we published a letter from Australia, in English. Our first letter this time is written in French of such elegance that it seemed a good idea to give readers a chance to test what they may have learned at school. (A translation is offered on p.10) The writer is a retired archivist/librarian who in 1992 contributed a lengthy paper to The 1nms Review on the books of the former Scots College in Paris. This has led to 'notes and comments' in the latest issue of May 1993 - bigger than ever at the old old price of £14 a year.*

J'ai pris connaissance avec beaucoup d'interet des numeros des 'Scalan news' que vous avez l' amabilite de m'envoyer. L'evocation du modeste seminaire perdu dans la nature ou, durant 'the penal times', la petite flamme catholique a ete maintenue vivante et lumineuse avec tant de courage et d'abnegation, est emouvante.

En France la persecution religieuse au moment de la Revolution fut violente, elle aussi (deux pretres de ma famille ont ete guillotinees en 1794), mais sa duree n'est pas comparable. Par contre, le recit dans les 'Scalan news' de destructions d' eglises, de pretres ordonnes a l' etranger et revenus au pays pour excercer en secret leur ministere, de messes dites clandestinement sur la lande, trouve son exacte equivalent dans celui de la persecution qui a suivi, pour les protestants, la revocation de l'edit de Nantes en 1685.

Par exemple, en Bas-Dauphine, ou vivait alors la famille calviniste de ma grandmere maternelle, les hugenots ont connu, pour une maniere differente de prier Dieu, les memes souffrances que celles subies par vos ancetres 'papistes': temples abattus, pasteurs formes a Geneve et, de retour dans la royaume, exerçant leur ministere au peril de leur vie, fideles contrains a l'abjuration ou a l'exil, cultes celebres en plein air, au 'Desert', dans la crainte constante de la surprise par les dragons du roi. ...

N'y a-t-il pas la matiere a une belle meditation sur la tolerance?

(Maurice Caillet, Paris)

Congratulations on your dove-tailing of Cheyne/ Arnage. I have copied it for a cousin of Doreen's who would (had the money been there) have been Hugh Leith-Ross VUI of Arnage. I made two corrections, one to the cross on the Cheyne arms making the bottom leg 'fitchee', or pointed. And your Ecclefergan as a 'former manse north of Tomintoul [becoming] a mass-centre', is doubly wrong: the building was once a church, and should not be described as anything more than a prayer room where mass has been celebrated on occasion - I hope Bishop Conti doesn't complain to you!

(A. T. MacQueen, Broughty Ferry)

Regarding the hymn sung at the last Scalan Mass, Handel wrote the music for his oratorio *Joshua*; such was its success that he inserted it into performances of another oratorio *Judas Maccabeus*. The fact that this was composed in 1746 and concerns a leader who overthrows an aristocratic invasion, and dwells on the joy of the people after his hard-earned victory, suggests that it does indeed celebrate, by allusion, Cumberland's triumphant return from Scotland to London. But at that stage the words were:

*See, the conquering hero comes! Sound the trumpet! Beat the drums!*

In later hymnbooks Handel's march was set to the words:

*Thine be the glory, Risen, conquering Son!*

The words were originally written by Edouard Baudry (1854-1932) as 'A Toi la gloire, O Ressuscite' and translated by Richard Hoyle (1875-1939).

(Donald Findlay, London)

Readers will be interested to learn that the latest version of OS 1/50,000 Sheet 36 has a front picture of 'Victor Gaffney's View' from his cairn on the High Road.

(Ian Gaffney, Kent)

'Scalan News' 5 has arrived in darkest Bucks - I'm surprised that a postage stamp was needed, so bursting with energy and purpose was this report. .. For my part I'm not sure if I have the puff to make Scalan again, but what I want to do before the End is to approach it from the Lecht. If so, I promise to bring my own pall-bearers. Meantime, good piping - and have a Happy New Year!

(E. A. Reeves, Gerrards Cross)

I came across the 'What is Scalan'? leaflet recently and enjoyed it. It was particularly interesting to read that the students dressed in black and blue tartan. I wondered what its design might be, so thought to write and ask whether you know it. I enclose this sample which might have some similarity - at least the wool is Scotch!

(Margaret Townshend, Keighley)

*The sample is on the editorial desk and looks very convincing. Mgr Copland says that the black and blue plaid mentioned in contemporary accounts of Scalan is 'the clerical tartan', worn by Scottish clergymen of all churches.*

#### Letter from Maurice Caillet

I received with great interest the copies of 'Scalan News' which you kindly sent. The evocation of the humble seminary lost in the wilds where, during penal times, the little Catholic flame was kept alight by courage and self sacrifice is moving.

In France religious persecution was violent during the Revolution (two priests of my family were guillotined in 1794) but did not last long, as with you. On the other hand the account in 'Scalan News' of chapels destroyed, priests returning from abroad to exercise their ministry in secret through outdoor masses, finds its exact equivalent in the persecution of French Protestants which followed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1682.

For example in Bas-Dauphine, where the Calvinist family of my maternal grandmother used to live, the Huguenots experienced, because of their way of worshipping God, the same sufferings as your 'papist' forebears: churches destroyed, ministers educated in Geneva returning to preach at the peril of their lives, the faithful given a choice between giving up their beliefs or going into exile, services in 'the desert', constant fear of being surprised by the King's dragoons ...

Surely there is matter here for a meditation on tolerance?

#### Builder's Report Mike Tait

I had hoped to give an account of the early work at Scalan in the December newsletter, but by then it was clear that progress would be slower than expected. Looking at the Scalan job objectively and with hindsight, it is a builder's nightmare.

Bringing equipment and material on site requires four-wheel drive, as there is no proper vehicular access beyond the Crombie Burn. The nearest builder's merchants are thirty miles away - Scalan's very remoteness is a real deterrent to any sane builder. And this slightly insane one's base is at the Back of Bennachie - expensive in time and tyres. So why did I take it on?

The challenge was too exciting to resist. The College is steeped in history and atmosphere: it is quite simply a wonderful place. Secondly it desperately needed skilled and sympathetic attention, and I was vain enough to believe that I had the necessary expertise. Finally I had just returned from an expedition to Zimbabwe with Operation Raleigh, having enjoyed it immensely, and reckoned that Scalan would not be so very different!

None of it has been easy. The underpinning required a three-foot trench the length of the building at the rear. Pick, pinch bar and

spade were used to remove boulder clay from under the wall. The work had to be undertaken in one metre sections, leaving sections of two metres undug. Each hole (there were sixteen) took about four hours. Then sixteen tons of sand and gravel aggregate had to be shovelled by hand from a heap on the road into the back of the pick-up truck, which then had to be driven across the ford and the load shovelled into a mixer with cement and water - carried by bucket from the milllade. Each of the sixteen holes required ten barrowloads of concrete. This stage of the work took a month.

There was then a month's delay to allow the concrete to harden, before inserting the steel ties - half way up the walls, and at even intervals - to stop further outward movement of the front wall. This required specialised electrical-tools and, of course, a generator. The drilling was done at shoulder height from the top of a stepladder. Each hole had to be very accurately drilled through two feet of stone wall - with sudden soft patches. Any error would have resulted in a broken or jammed drill bit at a replacement cost of £150. Each hole took about an hour to drill, and then a large square section had to be cut and chipped from around it to take the steel tie plates - if not the plates would have finished up proud of the finished harling. The concrete buttresses, no longer needed, have been removed: a long story' for another time, perhaps. This stage took ten days.

All the essential stabilising work was finished by early March, and we were then able to start on the inside of Scalan. (When I say 'we', there were usually two on site. Angus Carrick Buchanan, a history graduate, was my most regular assistant.) The first step was to remove flooring at first floor level, exposing the joist ends. These were in better condition than we expected, so that only three required to be spliced and rebbed. Exposure of the floor joist ends at nrsr noor level has revealed a quite definite step up of three inches or so, half way across the Boys' Oormi tory. As a builder I find this rather puzzling (your ideas?) but it will be reinstated when the floors are relaid.

Three additional windows have been opened up, one (above the front door) at a most unexpected height providing light at floor level upstairs. \ Two other windows, lost when Scalan became a farm house, have been opened up near the centre of the rear elevation at the same height. These would have given additional light to the passage leading to the chapel. All the familiar windows, after some hesitation, have been renewed as before with Georgian 'lang pane' glass (also traditional sash weights and cords) putting a fresh face on Scalan.

In the course of restoration we have made some discoveries. First, apart from the chimney stacks and 'skews' (forming the top edge of the gable) which are of dressed granite, the building is entirely constructed of limestone. It appears that the lime used in making mortar to bind these stone field gatherings was quarried and slaked locally. The sand used to mix with the lime and make mortar would have come, I suspect, from the bed of the Crombie. I have no doubt that the original builders of Scalan would have harled the walls with the same lime mortar. To harl or not to harl is a topic of lively debate among restorers, but water would stream through this kind of stone if not protected.

Perhaps the most interesting find, made while working on the inner north gable. Clearly there was access \ for the people of the Braes, by an . outside stair, to what had been the \ Bishop's chapel (with his room behind) I before Abbe MacPherson's church was erected at Chapeltown. There are other questions which arise from the excavation which has, of necessity, preceded restoration, but I would rather keep these for the next 'Scalan News' and ponder them meanwhile.

I shall end with a two personal observations. St Moluag brought Christianity to the area (and therefore in a sense to Scalan). He also established a church - my church - at Chapel of Garioch. Every year the 'Companions of St Moluag' (or youth fellowship) make a pilgrimage to Lismore: Or McNamee please note. Second, as convener of its Property Committee, I have the privilege of advising Gordon Presbytery on the repair and maintenance of the Church of Scotland's buildings. I am therefore enjoying the irony, as a Kirk elder, of performing the same service (but hands on) for this unique Roman Catholic building.

## The Property Deeds

These were located in the Scottish Record Office, since the committee was concerned that we should go forward on a secure legal footing. The document is dated January 16 1947. In exchange for £50 (plus ten shillings stamp duty) the Trustees are named as the Rev. Peter Bonnyman of St Mary's, 89 Abercromby Street, Glasgow; the Rev. David McRoberts, St Peter's College, Cardross; and the Rev. Alexander Stuart MacWilliam, Chapeltown, Glenlivet. All three are described as 'Clerk in Holy Orders', respectively President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Scalan Association.

There are six pages of dense legal prose, applicable to any Scottish property but some of it reading oddly for the remotest part of Glenlivet. Mines, metals, minerals and fossils are reserved to the Crown (except for coal) and the authorities also retain the right 'to carry electricity lines or cables and gas, water supply, drainage and sewer pipes from the adjoining ground through or across the said piece of ground (but not under any buildings thereon).'

Finally it may serve to check the ambitions of some future committee to know that the Scalan Association is not entitled to use the buildings 'for selling, ale, beer, porter, wine, whisky or any other spirituous liquors or for carrying on any trade, manufactory, brewery, distillery' or a series of other processes involving 'nauseous chemical operations or noisy manufacture'. The date of entry was given (sounding strangely English for Scots Law) as Whitsun of 1946. Perhaps these three Clerks in Holy Orders elected to enter upon their inheritance (and ours) at Pentecost.



## Holy Family at Scalan

*Taking the top primary class to St Michael Centre has become quite fashionable among Catholic teachers of the Aberdeen Diocese, but Mrs Pauline Repper created a new record this year by going for five days in May. Also helping to cater for the needs of her lively P7 class from Holy Family School, Aberdeen, were Mr Smith (parent), Mrs Parker (supply teacher) and Mr McKnight (head teacher. By no means all of the children are from Catholic homes, but all seem to have been absorbed by mass on the grass in front of Scalan. So was Bob the bus driver.*

On Thursday 27th May we visited Scalan in the Braes of Glenlivet, in the company of Fr Colin Stewart. While at Tomintoul we went on a number of interesting visits but I would say that our visit to Scalan was the best. We took our backpacks on the bus with us, and joked and listened to music on the 20-minute ride.

The scenery on the way was a oneoff sight, amazing. The good eyes of Mr Smith helped us to see a squirrel on a branch eating nuts that some kind person had put out, which shows that the people of the area are caring and . loving. Also on the way we saw little rabbits at the roadside, but as soon as Bob went by on the bus they scattered into different burrows.

Father Colin got out of his landrover. As we walked round the farm track some of the girls took turns to walk Cedric, his pet dog. We had a half mile to get there, putting up with the smell of cow droppings on the track! Once we got over a hill we could see the place as clear as day.

We went through a gate across the grass towards a tumbledown cottage. This is Scalan! We could see the metal supports holding the building so that it doesn't fall down. We went inside into a little room on the right. The floor upstairs was gone, and dust was falling everywhere. There was a sign, on the staircase telling you not to go up because it was unsafe flooring. We went into the boys' dormitory where they had to sleep on the floor only with a blanket - I could imagine them waking up in the morning with a sore and stiff back.

The old windows had been replaced by new ones, and a swallow was trying to get out but it couldn't because the windows were locked. When I looked at the visitors' book I saw my old class from St Peter's - Barrie Barnet, Ross Birnie, etc. etc.! I personally signed the book with the school and the date to tell who had been there and when.

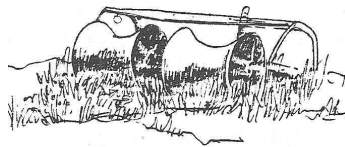
The house was used up to 1799 as a college or school for young boys who wanted to become priests. The boys would wake up at six o'clock and wash in the Crombie Burn. The students dressed in a black and blue tartan. For their breakfast they had porridge and for dinner the leftover porridge from the morning. If they were lucky they would have meat about three times a week.

Life was hard, with redcoats looking for Catholics and burning homes. The boys were scared in this hidden school. They studied Latin, Greek, French, Hebrew, Geography, Chronology and Rhetoric. The boys went to either Spain or Italy to continue their priestly education. All they seemed to do at Scalan was study, pray and eat, but sometimes they played out on the fields or on the green.

For a while we got to play, and we all pushed each other in an old cart. Jamie thought he found a bayonet, but it was only a piece of metal. We played in the field, jumping the burn and somersaulting down the hill, seeing who would get into hospital first or playing first person to break their necks gets a fiver!

Next Father Colin prepared for mass. We used a chalice that once belonged to Bishop Hay who got it from Pope Leo XII. There were a couple of interruptions from Cedric the dog. All you heard was Father Colin saying a prayer and suddenly 'Ced!'. Then he would carry on with the prayer. We sang for a while and then Father Colin distributed Holy Communion.

We had a drink of pure water out of the Bishop's well. It was beautiful. Then we walked back down the road. On the whole a good, interesting visit - if you pass it's worth a look, although it can be a bit boring for nonCatholics. But I enjoyed it just the same, even if it is in a remote place like Glenlivet.



Sandy Matheson was able to tell Ann Dean the purpose of this abandoned agricultural implement. Answers on a postcard ...

## Family History

*Family history is so popular these days that the following letter seems worth publishing at length. There is now, apparently, a Catholic Family History Society led by a man called Michael Candy in London (details on request). That might suggest a rather sectarian way of tracing ancestors, like the Mormons who have the biggest computerised record of who has lived and died - with the express purpose of enabling them to be posthumously baptised as Mormons. Spooky! But the Catholic point is that many of our forebears, as in Glenlivet, were baptised by priests and recorded in their 'unofficial' registers, not now on computers. This makes the memories of relatives all the more important.*

Dear Mrs McEwan,

Thank you very much for your letter of last May and for putting my name on the Newsletter list - I have received all, to date.

Yes, my Mother's side of the family - the McHardys - lived in Glenlivet from before the Eighteenth Century. My uncle, Valentine Kilbride, found out details of the family tree and gave me a copy on my 21st Birthday. I have it in front of me now.

My great- great- great- grandparents include Charles Mc Hardy, farmer, of Bolletton, Braes of Glenlivet (1767), Rachel Michie of Scalan (date unknown) and Alan Stuart, farmer, water bailiff and exciseman of Eskmulloch (1765). *[This is interesting historical information. It is not well known that private whisky distilling, worthy of government attention in the person of an exciseman, began so early - Ed.]* My great-grandfather McHardy is listed as a shoemaker at Scalan in the late 1800s.

Some years ago my Aunt Cecilia (nee Md-lardy) and my Uncle, Valentine Kilbride lived at Tombae. They are both now dead, but my two remaining McHardy Aunts are alive and well, living at Solihull and Abergavenny. My Uncle Bernard's Widow, Isabelle McHardy, lives in Brighton. I believe she often visits Glenlivet and is very friendly with the Grants (also related to the McHardys).

I also have a sampler, worked by my Grandmother (Mary Stuart) in 1885, when she was twelve years old. She taught at Chapeltown School, and my Mother, Aunts and Uncles went there, before the family moved away - to Fort Augustus and, many years later, to Caldey Island off Pembrokeshire, where my parents were married and all my own brothers and sisters (and myself) were born. *[It is a remarkable coincidence that Peter Anson, who is virtually responsible for rescuing Scalan, was part of the community of Anglican Benedictines who came over to Rome in 1913 - Ed.]*

During the War, my Mother used to tell me about the beautiful mountains, the heather and the burns, which she planned to show us after the War was over ~sadly she died in 1943, very young, and I eventually reached the mountains in 1973. Since that visit I have been back in 1982 and 1991. ..

(Helena Parcell, Cardiff)

*The map on the back page is intended to accompany Ann Dean's 'Crofts of Scalan'. It is dated 1869.*

