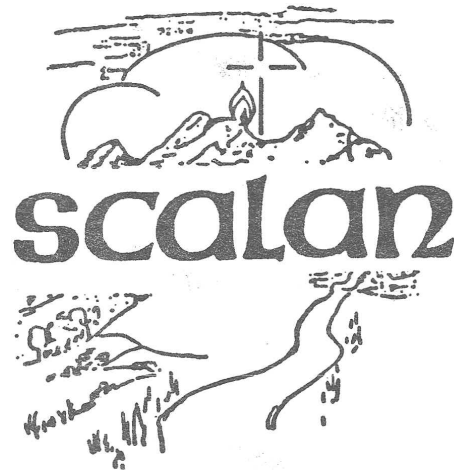


This is a partial edition

My copy did not scan easily; Mike Morrison



news

No23, November 2001.

'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)



The AGM took place on Tuesday 5 June 2001 when 32 members assembled" for Mass at 12 noon. The meeting followed a lunch provided by Delnashaugh Hotel in the Braes' Hall. The official report by our Secretary Fr Michael Briody will go out next May, but (briefly) the meeting was memorable for a lively discussion of the desirability of using matt blue paint in the spirit of the 18th century; also for a large illustration brought to the meeting by Fr James Morrow, showing what the roofless Chapel might look like if adapted for bus parties.

The Annual Pilgrimage Mass on Sunday 1 July was blessed with fine weather, so that a new canopy donated by Mgr Copland was hardly needed as a shield against the elements. Our President also provided the generator which enabled a musical group from Buckie to make their instruments heard. Bishop Mario Conti of Aberdeen led the ten priests who concelebrated in front of the Old College: Mgr Copland, Canon John Symon, Frs Michael Briody, Eddie Traynor, Joseph Tool, Donald Mackay, Eddie McGhee, John Kelly (Coatbridge) and Joseph. Calleja who was about to take 'over in Morar. There were also two Deacons: Revs. Vincent McQuaid and Stephen Armstrong. Our treasurer Jane McEwan attributed a record collection to the homily delivered by Fr Eddie McGhee ~ see p. 4. Two bagpipers were present for the first time: Jamie Cameron Stuart, from Polmont, and your editor from the Well of the Lecht, still trying to tramp the Whisky Road back into place. Their two instruments sounded terrible when skirling together; so one played before the Mass and one after.

The Local Committee met at Keith on 25 September, the day after Bill Grant's death. RIP. Dr David McNamee and his new wife Aileen, as recent newcomers; joined Mgr Copland and Bill and Jane McEwan in welcoming Fr Jim Thomson of Banchory .. Apologies were received from Anne Baxter and Alasdair Roberts ,the remaining members. The possibility was raised of using the new generator to enable G. Beverly & Sons to continue working during the autumn season. The future use of laminated display boards in every room was discussed, and it was agreed that a lighter shade of blue should be used on the front door. Finances were reported to be healthy.

The illustration opposite is taken from .', *The Universe* for 12 September 1993. It shows the College after the first phase of restoration revealed windows which had been blocked when Bishop Hay raised. the roof. He created an attic on top of the original building erected by John Geddes as rector. It also shows the metal plates which hold six steel rods inserted by Taitt Building to secure the walls. The post-war concrete buttresses are gone. and the new harling has still to be applied. Mrs Jane McEwan takes up these points in a progress report on p. 2. Her address, for those who suspect their £5 annual subscription has not been paid, or who wish to join (cheques payable to The Scalán Association) is:

Ogilvie Cottage, Gallowhill, BALLINDALLOCH AB37 9DL.

The Restoration of Scalan

Jane McEwan , on behalf of the Committee

The Committee feels that, now is an appropriate time to explain the various stages of work being undertaken for the restoration of the Old seminary of Scalan.

It was decided at the AGM of 1990 to form a local Committee to oversee the work required. Monsignor Copland was appointed "Chairman and the Committee was mainly located locally.

The first thing to be done was to decide the really necessary things to be done, to make the building wind and watertight. To this end, underpinning of the building was of vital importance, and steel ties were inserted in the building, to strengthen and stabilise the walls. This represented a lot of work, which of course is concealed .. to the casual visitor. The rafters were sound and needed the minimum of attention. The buttresses at the front of the building were removed as they were more of a hindrance than help in shoring up the walls. A new floor had to be laid in the Boys' Dormitory as the original flooring was in a dangerous state.

The next stage was the removal of the original harling and replacement with the type of mix used in the 18th century. With the removal of the old harling, several small windows were exposed which had been hitherto been unsuspected. With the repair of the harling completed, it was then time to replace 'the windows. Again the fashion of the 18th century was adhered to in the design of the astragals and sashes'.

When all this remedial work was completed in 1995, we were fortunate in being awarded a plaque by the prestigious Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (one of only 5 awarded that year). All the contractors engaged in the restoration work were also, awarded certificates.



The next task was the clearing of the Old Chapel, which over the years had become overgrown with ivy. The stone was then partially restored by an expert drystone dyker.

Over the years" the interest in Scalan has been steadily increasing, as has the number of visitors. To make it possible to welcome larger numbers, toilets were added at the back of the building (including a mandatory toilet for the disabled).

The ground owned by the Scalan Association was then fenced off to keep sheep out. Rowan trees have been planted to commemorate the 3 priests who formed the Scalan Association in 1946.

We are now engaged in refurbishing the interior of the Seminary. To do this work we have employed G. Beverly & Sons of Rhynie. They are willing to undertake the work as and when funds permit. It will be necessary to tidy and finish doors, window-sills, floors, etc.

Bill Grant

C. G. McGillivray

We were all shocked and saddened to learn of the death on 24th September 2001 of Bill Grant, Nether Clashnoir, Braes of Glenlivet, at the age of 78. Although failing in health Bill was still very interested and involved in everything that went on in the area. Born and bred in the family farm of Upper Clashnoir, Bill worked there with his parents all his early life until he took over the tenancy of the farm himself in 1965. As the small farms were losing favour, and with a Government amalgamation scheme in progress, Bill took over the much bigger unit of

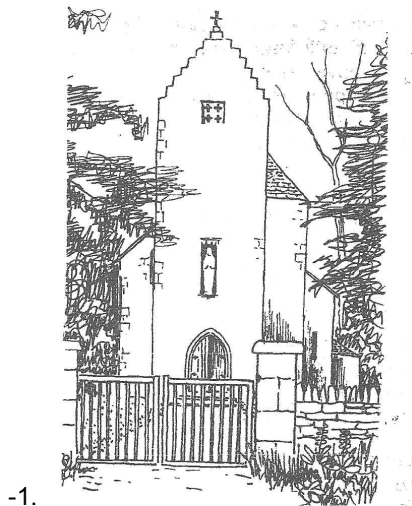
the Bochel, Thain, Lagual and Glach in 1968 and always viewed this as the best decision of his farming career ..

Deeply involved in many organisations throughout the area and eager to help our rural community, Bill decided to contest the Speyside Glenlivet seat of Grampian Regional Council, and won it. For the next eight years he travelled the seventy miles to Aberdeen to attend Council, and often had meetings in the evening when he returned - all very stressful, but Bill enjoyed it. However in 1984, to relieve the pressure a bit, Bill decided to give up farming and moved back to Nether Clashnoir, where Irene and he had started their married life.

Giving up politics in 1990, Bill devoted much of his time. to three of his local interests: the Roman Catholic church in the Braes, the Old College of Scalan, and the Braes Hall. He sort of assumed a caretaker role for them all. A devout Catholic, Bill was a Minister of the Eucharist and several times conducted a service in the absence of the priest. He kept a close watch on the fabric of the church and took charge of the parish finances.

We hope and trust that this work will be completed next year, at which point a big question mark looms up - What then?

The Committee would be interested in receiving constructive ideas from our Members, bearing in mind the remoteness of the location and the advancing age of the working Committee.



-1.

The Scalan Homily

At the beginning of this month I had the privilege of being asked to deliver the homily at the annual mass at Scalan.

There are not many situations in celebrating the liturgy that make me nervous but I must admit I felt a little flutter of apprehension. Fortunately one of the cocolebrants was Canon John Symon. With his white flowing beard John looked like the ' Ancient of Days', and having taught me at Blairs (History) and Drygrange (Philosophy) at least I had someone on hand to blame for my lack of erudition!

As I set out from Saltcoats on Sunday morning I was "very conscious of my role as a pilgrim. Saltcoats to Scalan and back is a round trip of over 400 miles, and I suppose to make that .. kind of journey to spend not more than two hours at first glance seems slightly foolish. I was reminded of the words of T. S. Eliot in the final of his four quartets, Little Gidding:

If you come this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion.' You are not here to
verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer
is more
Than an order of words, the conscious
occupation ..
Of the praying mind" or the sound of voices praying .. ;

We have come by our different places by different routes to this special place ' where prayer has been valid'. By all the objective standards of our world in the 21st century, the journey to this remote spot in the Braes of Glenlivet does not make any sense. It only makes sense because we have chosen to come here to honour those who have kept the Faith alive in the most difficult situation in our History.

Those like me who have traveled from the West of Scotland take pride in our heritage, which may be Irish, or Italian or Polish. Because of numerical strength in the West and Central belt, it is easy to delude ourselves that we are the Catholic Church in Scotland. In this sacred place we remember. that the Faith was never lost in Scotland. In this place young men prepared for the priesthood, and for ministry in a radically different Scotland to the one that we know today. Theirs was a ministry of Scots Catholics to Scots Catholics, and that is why Scalan has such a unique place in the history of the Catholic Church in Scotland.

The Gospel for the first Sunday in July reminds us that Jesus sent out his disciples to bring the Good News, and they came back to Jesus. filled with joy because people listened to what they had to say. In the eighty and more years of its existence, Scalan has tried to meet the needs of those who wanted to and were willing to listen to the Good News. In other words, 'out there' were people desperate to hear what they had to say, and be nourished and strengthened by word and sacrament. Without the Faith, held and sustained by ordinary members of. the Catholic community here in the north-east of Scotland there would have been no need for Scalan. That is another reason why we are here 'to kneel where prayer has been valid,' not just because here men were prepared for priesthood but because in this area the Faith was cherished and nurtured in ordinary homes and families.

It is important that we pray here, but Eliot suggests that 'prayer is more than an order of words.' If our journey here is simply about remembering the past, then somehow we will have failed those who lived and worked in this place. Look at the clergy assembled here in front of you If they were second hand cars would you buy one?! The future of the Catholic Church in the 21st century is the responsibility of all of us. As the number of clergy decreases, it increases our responsibility for the preaching of the Good News.' We cannot afford to be passive in our own time.

Coming to Scalan is about remembering the past, and that is important. It is about gathering together and praying now today in this place, it is about seizing the moment, but above all it is about . committing ourselves to the future of the Catholic Church in Scotland, and that, in the spirit of today's Gospel, is essential.

At the end of mass Bishop Conti took the opportunity to thank everyone who had made the day so special, and to point out that the clergy assembled, aged and careworn though they might be, were not the bunch of 'old bangers'

that I had suggested, but were rather to be likened to 'vintage cars'. Who am I to argue with that ?

Scalan-watching

Among those who, visited this summer were students' from St Andrew's College, Bearsden; Fr Thomson from Banchory, with a strimmer; the Abbot of Pluscarden; and, as' a guest of local historian Sir Edward Peck, Mrs Ann Wroe from London.

Secret Priests in the Heather

Ann Wroe

Since it is so easy to be a Catholic in Britain these days, it does the heart and soul good to visit a place where the faith has been struggled for .. Having missed Sunday Mass because of laziness; because I was in the wilds of Scotland and did not know where to start to look for one, I was shamed two days later by finding - deep in these same wilds. - a tiny building where priests were trained, and Mass regularly celebrated, against all the odds.

Scalan seminary lies in the Braes of Glenlivet in Moray, in a remote dip of the Grampians where its enemies were not meant to find it. The Gaelic word *scalan* means a hidden shelter, a hovel of turves or a hide of juniper branches where fowlers would creep up on birds. In the beginning of 1717, the seminary was like that: a stone building roofed with turves or heather divots, standing in poorly drained fields. at the foot of a hill. Yet in the years to 1799 about 100 young men . were trained to be priests there; and as a result the Catholic faith was kept going in Scotland.

The modern visitor finds the place still hidden, approached down a stony track that then becomes a grass path scattered with purple vetch and pansies. Goldfinches and swallows flock over the fields on either side, and rain and sun hang in curtains on the mountains. The path runs on, ending in what appears to be an ordinary farmyard. A small whitewashed house sits beside several buildings, one lived in (net curtains and geraniums) one with an old red tractor garaged in it, the rest in ruins. There is no clue that anything unusual has happened here. Inside the little white house, the impression is the same: a succession of ordinary rooms, long-abandoned and dark, with fireplaces and wattle and daub partition walls. Only the notices over the doors give the game away: the master's room the dormitory, the library, the chapel. In one room, adjoining a ruined building that became the chapel later, a tiny hatch in the wall shows where the sacred elements were passed through to the priest on the other side.

When Bishop Gordon founded Scalan in 1717, it was the only seminary in Scotland. To celebrate Mass had been an offence since 1560. The seminary was three times attacked and burned to the ground by Redcoats, the third time after Culloden in 1746. Carrying the Blessed Sacrament and their books, the priests and their students fled into the hills; but they kept returning. Some money came from Rome, but they were protected mostly by the local people, who tipped them off to attacks and who, in peaceful times, made their way for miles across the braes to hear Mass there themselves.

Conditions at the seminary, marauding Hanoverians apart, were generally as harsh as they could be. The poor, wet land would grow nothing but oats and a few vegetables, so the students lived mainly on porridge. At any one time there would be about half a dozen seminarians in residence. They were up at first light, to bed with the sun, and devoted their time to prayer, scripture and Latin. The bishop encouraged exercise, but the chief priority was clearly to keep warm. Students admitted as boarders (paying £6 a year for the privilege) had to bring with them, besides basic clothes, two good blankets, which they left in the house at the end of their course. If they proved 'dangerous to others' and had to be expelled, they still left their blankets behind.

That said, there are small signs of comfort at Scalan. Bishops stayed there, and the rooms where they kept residence still have traces of flowered wallpaper and blue paintwork. The bishop's bed recess, where he slept on a chaff mattress, would have been cosy, and the walls are two feet thick. Whatever the difficulties, the place worked; it trained priests, playing host to a succession of young men who were prepared to undergo every privation to become shepherds of souls. Some of their names survive in a record which Bishop Hay kept from 1762-6, in Italian for greater secrecy: Giacomo Hamilton, Giovanni Preston, and the others. Once ordained, they were known as 'heather priests'. The secrecy and sense of daring must have fuelled their enthusiasm, as it does today in countries such as China. It may be true, though sad, that easy and tolerant times make the priesthood less attractive.

Scalan now has an ecumenical Association that helps preserve it, whose treasurer is Jane McEwan" of OgiIvie Cottage, Gallowhill in Glenlivet. (It is also the subject of a very good new book by John Watts for the Tuckwell Press.) The seminary is being slowly and lovingly restored, with new wall supports and proper window frames to keep it safe against the weather. One of the largest donors to the restoration appeal is the local distillery, Chivas Bros, and there lies an interesting parallel. In the late eighteenth century, the track that leads to Scalan was also a whisky smuggling road, down which the brew from dozens of hidden and illicit stills was ferried south and east. Legal distilleries now dot this part of Moray like churches, with their white walls and curiously steeped roofs. Whisky and religion alike are not only tolerated, but celebrated here; and both, as it happens, are called the water of life.

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The Tablet has in a sense already reprinted an item from Scalan News. A Stop, Press insert by Veronica Cordon Smith in the June 2000 issue celebrated the tolerant religion of native Glenlivet. She sent a letter on the same lines to Britain's leading Catholic magazine as a follow-up to Ann Wroe's article. Veronica took issue with the composer James MacMillan for his much publicised lecture at the Edinburgh Festival about anti-Catholic prejudice. MacMillan replied to Veronica's points at some length, saying that her 'recollections of Scalan and Glenlivet were evocative and encouraging: She should be reassured that my speech was made in the "hope that it would make a difference and contribute to a spirit of reconciliation in Scotland.' A third letter, also sparked off by Scalan, then appeared as follows.

Priests in the Heather

PatrickReyntiens

Ann Wroe's article reminds me of an experience I had as a boy often. In the spring of 1935 my family hired Samalanum House in Moidart. It was cut off from the rest of Scotland, and you could only get to it by boat. Glenluig Catholic church a mile away had a priest who used Gaelic for his sermon and Latin for the Mass. Nearly everyone rowed or sailed to church on Sundays.

'We found on enquiry that Samalanam had been a seminary up to the beginning of the 19th century. Students were prepared, for, the priesthood in their first year. Then in high summer they were rowed over to Ireland (it took four men a day and a half) and landed in Donegal by night. A series of farms down the west coast took them in under the Gaelic rules of hospitality until they were in Kerry. There they waited till autumn until a small fast boat from Spain took the students to El Coruna. From there they walked to the Scots College at Valladolid. After seven years they returned by the same route :- < Kerry, Donegal, Moidart - before being distributed over the Highlands and Islands. The whole clandestine operation was never discovered.

Samalaman (emphasis on first syllable and swallow the rest, Gaelic-style - meaning unknown) was indeed one of the West 'Scalans' which succeeded Eileim Ban on Loch Morarr. It closed four years after Scalan in 1803 when Highland students (and the bishop) moved to Lismore on Loch Linnhe. Two people have already sidestepped a request to write about the seminary, pleading lack of knowledge. This is a start, but the journey to Spain by way of Ireland belongs to the same confusion zone as the building at Samalaman which locals call the Monks' Toilet. (Eilean Ban itself is also remembered as Monks' Island, and there are traces of a Monks' Wall for trapping salmon at the mouth of the Morar river near Bourblach, which was another West Scalan.

Shortly after John Geddes moved the Glenlivet seminary across the Crombie burn and built what is substantially the college we have today, he was sent to Spain by the bishops to rescue the moribund Scots College which was then in Madrid. He organised the move to Valladolid, and was rector from 1771 until he left for Scotland as a bishop nine years later. " While there he made the speech from which the front cover extract is taken. Thanks to an excellent history of the College by Bishop Maurice "T aylor of Galloway, the details of most journeys between Scotland and Spain can easily be checked.

The first six Lowland students, only two of whom had been at Scalan, sailed from Abetdeen to Bilbao in the Basque country. They were followed by six young Highlanders who landed at Santander near the Pyrenees. From 1775 the regular route was from Carron on the Firth of Forth to El Ferrol, near Corunna. A social man, Geddes used his friendship with a director of the famous Carron Ironworks to send out boys as well as books. The

names of the ships which returned with iron' ore in their holds are on record.

Allan MacDonald, who was the first Samalaman student to go to Spain in 1785, sailed from Leith to Oporto. William Fraser (who became a bishop in Nova Scotia) had a dramatic journey from Moidatt to the same town in northern Portugal which has recently become familiar to many Scots Catholics through football. Fraser stepped on shore with great relief, his ship having been blown from the Bay of Biscay to the coast of Brazil. His hair went white later.



Two students 'arrived in Valladolid from Samalaman' without the route being clearly specified, Charles MacDonald in 1788 and William Chisholm in 1794, but rowing boat to Donegal seems an unlikely first leg in the light of all that was written down about routes. Due to the French Wars no students were sent out during a nine-year period to 1803, when the Highland Seminary moved to Lismore.

From Queen's Cross to Scalan

Over the years many copies of this little magazine have been packed and posted from Queen's Cross, Aberdeen, where St Joseph's School shares the former Convent of the Sacred Heart with Bishop Conti. Mindful of what her past Primary 7 pupils had done, and still visiting Glenlivet after good preparation in class, Mrs Pat Pritchard sent in examples of how the children responded last May. These are presented as' a composite story.

A few weeks ago our class visited Scalan. I stepped out of the bus and onto the soft Highland grass. The cool breeze blew gently on my face. In the vague distance you could see the old rocky ruins of the original Scalan. It was burned down twice. The site is completely in the middle of nowhere, and I was surprised the soldiers had found it. The building lay in a hopeless state leaving nature, to run over it. At the side of it was a small bum where the boys washed. I dipped my hand in the icy water and felt sorry for them.

A bridge over the bum led to where the newer seminary stood. The door lay open. It was like a sign asking everyone to come in. As I stepped inside the house I felt a wave of gratitude to the people who kept our religion secure. There was a plan of the house and, I was surprised how many rooms there were in a "not very big space. We first went into, the study, and dining room. I thought how the boys would sit there studying for hours on end. It was dusty and dark in the corridor. Everything, looked so old. The light was beautiful reflecting off the dark wood, and, the walls were carefully cemented stone by stone.

While I was in the building I had a feeling of well being like I had Someone protecting me. I am proud of our heritage. I think, of the boys suffering during the hard times. They put their lives in danger so that we could learn about Jesus. I know a lot of people who would need some serious persuading to do what these boys did, risking their lives for God and for their faith. I was really glad we visited Scalan. It was very interesting and I would like to go again.

The Blairs Pyke

Canon Peter A. Moran

I am prompted by Hugh Farmer's article in the latest *Scalan* News to send a note about 'pyke' as the Blairs slang for suit. The tailor at Blairs for a long period was a Davidson, but there were other Davidson families so by-names were needed to distinguish one from another. Two such by-names were Strypie Davidson and Pykie Davidson: the first lived at Strypeside (i.e., the side of the burn) but the second, the tailor, lived on the main road side, in the first house west of the present Copland's Garage. His by-name, was Pykie, presumably because he lived alongside

the *Turnpike*.

In 1842 this replaced the older South Deeside Road which had been higher up the hillside. These 'turnpike' (or toll) roads explain the many toll houses, . recognisable by their apsidal shape (i.e., with a semi-circular part jutting towards the road, with two windows: each facing a different way along the road) for example a mile beyond . Dunecht, just west of the quarry on the A944 Aberdeen to Alford road. These houses were where one section of the toll road ended, and the toll-gate (the actual turnpike) had to be opened. by the keeper after the payment was made.

Monsignor Willie Murdoch, formerly V.G. of the Aberdeen Diocese and at Blairs 1914-19, once mentioned to me that he had a suit (jacket, waistcoat and trousers) made by the Blairs tailor. It occurred to me to ask him whether the students were inclined to criticise the Blairs suits, just as students have always been inclined to criticise college food:

He thought for a minute and replied: 'Well I thought the suits were all right, but I remember walking down the drive to the tailor's with another student, both of us to be measured for a suit. The other fellow complained that his previous waistcoat had been too tight across the chest, and he was determined that his new suit would be roomy enough. So when the tailor held his tape-measure to the student, he took a' deep 'breath and puffed out his chest. The' tailor, however, stepped back and said,' Ay, ay, loon, I'll jist wait or ye blaa doon:'

The shoes, incidentally, were also made by a Davidson, in the next house west from the tailor's, but I am not aware of any by-name for him: perhaps the by-names were established in an earlier generation when there would have been fewer separate Davidson households.

The father of Betty McGee, who lives near the Cathedral in Aberdeen, made shoes for the Blairs boys. Over a long period from 1852-91 the Rev. Andrew Fleming (an. Aberdonian convert) looked after finance attBlairss and was remembered by the boys for his frugality: We saw him only at Mass, and in the refectory, or when he acted as Secretary at the yearly - measuring - of students for new outfits. To him you went for redress if your shoes did not fit; but received none. If they were too stUlll he assured you they would stretch; if too large, that your feet would grow. '

A Bobby on Ben Macdhui:

John Duff's book about Britain's first mountain rescue team has just been published by *Leopard* after featuring in several issues of that magazine (see p, 14). The man who is now President of . the Scalan Association was a key figure at the start: 'Braemar Mountain Rescue Association was formed in May 1965. There were a dozen or so of us present at the inaugural meeting, including, crucially, Father Copland, who was elected, president.'

Readers Write

A 'Doors Open Day' enabling people to see inside buildings not normally open : to the public was held at Knockando Woolmill, between Advie and Craigellachie on Speyside, in September. It is described in the leaflet as 'a very unusual survival of a small working woollen mill within its associated farm setting. Probably dating from the second half of the 18th century, it was originally water driven and contains a complete set of early textile machinery revealing the development of mechanised wool processing and weaving.'

In 1976 the mill was bought by the Knockando Mill Company, which maintained production and craft skills and now proposes to tackle the conservation issues inherent in the condition of the buildings and machinery in order to ensure a viable and appropriate future for what has been described as a jewel of industrial heritage.

The last yarn was spun in 1983 and . now only the weaving machinery is used. On the 'Doors Open Day' one of the looms was being used to weave cloth in the natural white wool - the cloth to be used in making habits for the monks at Pluscarden Abbey.

Keir Cruickshank, Fochabers.

This retired agriculturist and market gardener has discovered Scalan, and would like to know more about its

water wheels and history as a farm. Glenlivet people object, incidentally, 'when Knockando, beside the Pole Inn where you turn off for the Braes, is pronounced like Knockando with the stress on the middle syllable.

Two items especially interested me in the May issue. One was the article about Lord Lovat at Loch Morar, because I listen to Fr Fitzsimmon's programme on Sunday morning and the prize question was, 'Where was the last battle fought on British soil?' Needless to say I hadn't a clue that it was Culloden until I read my Scalan News.

The other thing that brought back memories was the piece about Martin Farrelly and stained glass on Canna. About four years ago I was on holiday at Aboyne with Bernadette Moran [RIP - see ScN 161 and bumped into his wife Valerie - what a job I had getting my tongue round the name Valerie Farrelly! We arranged a visit to their home in the chapelhouse .. While Bernadette and Valerie chatted, Martin showed me round the workshop because he could see I was interested. He is a lovely man. .

Margaret Cowie, Aberdeen.

Here is a Canna window .. More in the next,. issue about others following the discovery of Martin Farrelly by the Highland District.



Thanks for the West Highland Priests booklet and *Scalan News*. They will be a great help in the coming weeks. [The writer works for the *Scottish Catholic Observer* and spent the summer visiting and writing about heritage sites.] I was in Barra at the weekend and can see why people describe it as the most beautiful of the Western Isles. This weekend I'll be staying in Glasgow for the first time in three weeks; which part of me is looking forward to .. However I'll be : back on the road the following weekend, heading up to Scalan for the Mass with Bishop Conti .. After that I'll be heading for Buckie to find out about the churches round there.

Gregor K yle, Bearsden.

Reporter and photographer duly. turned up and were introduced to members; of the Local Committee.

Well done the volunteers who run the Scalan Association - it is a marvellous organisation, and the arrival of *Scalan News* is always a highlight. Would it be possible to send a copy with background information to Lindy Cheyne at Drumblair Lodge; Forgue AB54 6EE? Lindy is the new editor of the *Leopard* magazine and very well informed about north-east Scotland, but to my amazement she had never heard of Scalan - whereas I have a portfolio of photographs taken over many years .. She was impressed when I told her of its poignant and stoic past. I'm sure the Scalan Association could benefit from her interest. ,

Fiona ,Bushe, Lumsden.

Fiona has recently written a horseback article for Leopard (see below) prompting this editor's suggestion that she herself should not only write another one about Scalan but use her horses to bring the old Whisky Road back into use for the goawth area known as equine tourism - otherwise pony trekking. Lindy Cheyne will indeed be sent

a copy of this issue.

My sister and I were most interested in your account of the production and issuing of Scalán News, involving Morar School and the printing unit at the Station. We know Morar very well and thoroughly enjoyed reading about it.

Margaret Flanagan, Bearsden.

Same again for this issue, but the pupils of Lady Lovat School will not be hearing about Bonnie Prince Charlie in Morar and Arisaig until after their highly appreciated package and postage work is done.

My wife and I spent a few days of perfect weather in the Highlands calling at a few Catholic sites I had (not visited such as Eskadale and Marydale in Strathglass; also the sadly shrunken Fort Augustus, no longer an abbey. One site we sought out was Torgyle in Glenmoriston. It appears on the Bartholomew 1 : 100 000 map as 'R. C. Chapel' but has vanished from the Scottish Catholic Directory. We found it with some difficulty behind a screen of trees, structurally sound but chaotic inside. A modern mural survives behind where the altar used to be.

Why was a church built there at all? The only houses near it are modern ones. The old Directories I was able to consult show that it was served from Fort Augustus, although we could see there was living accommodation beyond the sanctuary. What was the origin of the painting? .

Ian Willocks, Dundee.

The request' prompted a flurry of pulling books from shelves, and the Right Rev. Mark Dilworth, formerly Abbot of Fort Augustus and now of Iona, provided memories and an answer to the final question.

I knew Torgyle well from the age of thirteen. The railway road crosses to the other side of the river at Torgyle bridge, but a lesser road continues on the same side to Dalreichart, where as Parish Priest I visited the school, and Balintombuie where I conducted my first funeral. There were parishioners at Ceannacroc too.

Until 1878 Fort Augustus was in the Western District but "Glenmoriston and Stratherrick (across Loch Ness) were in the Northern District. As for the mural or backdrop to the altar, I seem to remember that it was done by a Fort Augustus monk in the Beuron style - very formal and precise. There were several in the Abbey.

+ Mark OSB, Edinburgh.

Braes Bits and Pieces

Isobel Grant

Jeems came back from a cattle sale in Tornintoul with Willie Matheson Scalán and asked him in to Crombie Cottage. Mary laid a nice tea with scones as well as a loaf and home made butter, and as she had just made lemon curd she filled a glass dish for a treat. After the meal he said to Mary, 'I'm sorry I finished the lemon curd - I forgot I wasn't at home. If nice tasting jam is on the table I usually finish the dish.' Mary just laughed about it. He was seldom away from Scalán.

The Shoemaker would never allow us to take flowers for school. He said flowers were living and shouldn't be picked. Lena, Belnoe mostly brought flowers from Mrs Russell's - she always had a lovely garden. I remember she had very tasty red rhubarb which Johnnie had brought from Montana, and he came for some of it when he was at the Shop house.

The children from Knockandhu used to walk up to Clashnoir for a small pail of skimmed milk to make a rice or sago pudding. It cost one penny. They always had plenty milk at Rattray's as there were a lot of cows. I once went there to see the ploughing match; and Mrs Rattray and Dolly made tea and buns. The horses were all decorated

with little bells on their foreheads and special coloured string, and were beautifully groomed. Teddy and the rest of us cleaned all the harness. Willie Stuart Belnoe got first prize for the neatest drills.

Ian Stuart Shop cried every Sunday as his mother made him wear his kilt for mass. No other boy had a kilt.. Was he glad when he grew out of it! My sister Mary got the kilt and wore it a lot. It was Gordon tartan, I think, not Stuart.



When it was threshing time at the Bochel six of us were needed, all working at great speed. One man drove the wheel with the horse at the back of the barn. George Bochel fed the sheaves into the mill while I undid the banns and laid them on the stand. One man emptied the corn into a sack, one took off the straw at the other end, and a boy tramped the straw down. When it was finished George called 'Whoa!' and horse and boys stopped. The whole thing started with a rick which had been carried in sheaves to the top of the barn door. George was the best one to build them and did the same for Clashnoir - you could always tell his because they came right to a point.

The Spanish Gordons and Huntly

The authors of this 36-page booklet, Ann Dean and Mike Morrison, have written here (*ScN19* and *ScN21*) about the Spanish Gordons of Wardhouse, near Huntly, and the Wallakirk graveyard beside Beldorney Castle. Spanish Gordons were back in Scotland in September for a rededication of the graveyard by Bishop John Dukes, successor to the late Canon Lewis McWilliam at St Margaret's Huntly.

Ann's narrative records the friendship between Arthur Gordon, founder of the world's leading sherry company, and John Geddes who rescued both Scalan and the Scots College in Spain. Her clear family trees chart the descent of such present day tycoons as the Marques de Bonanza. Mike's photos enhance the text, which includes the way his' quest for the Spanish Gordons' ended when they came to Huntly in numbers for Gordon 2000.

The booklet has been selling well at £3, with profits going to the Scalan Association. Write to Ann Dean, West Lediken, INSCH AB52 6LI:.

Stuart Mitchell, 1936-2001

Stuart Mitchell was a great enthusiast, and the Scalan Association is fortunate that his interests led him up from lower Banffshire to the Braes of Glenlivet. The first of two articles on the 18th century settlement of the Braes appeared in *ScN13*, and he returned to the business of putting the seminary into context in June 1999, this time supported by his computer-generated maps.

Although not a Catholic, Stuart was moved whenever the Tomintoul-Glenlivet Priest. Colin Stewart appeared on Grampian Television. His map-making skills were given without charge to the Scottish Catholic Heritage Commission for the *Historic Catholic Sites* brochure. This placed Scalan in the context (once again) of mass-sites and other seminaries in what Bishop Conti styled a 'broad swathe' between Aberdeen and Barra: the Northerly

Belt?

Stewart was an expert genealogist, with all the knowledge of parish registers and gravestones which that implies - he once said the cemetery at Gamrie was the coldest place on earth! Members of the local family history society became aware of Catholic records through him, and also of the by-names used by Braes folk who kept their heads down. Two of his major interests came together in *Tales of the Bays of Glenlivet*, for which he provided maps as well as a scholarly chapter on the place-names of an area which has been largely ignored by experts.

In all these Scalan-related matters Stuart was a witty but demanding correspondent (demanding to be answered with equivalent attention to detail) and his letters are greatly missed.

Correspondence

Alasdair Roberts 3 Bracara

MORAR PH40 4PE

or (perhaps truly online this time!)

alasdair_bracara@hotmail.com

