

Scalan College

Denomination: Roman Catholic.

Status: Historic building cared for by volunteers. Formerly a seminary for training priests.

Visited by: Bruce A Lindsay.

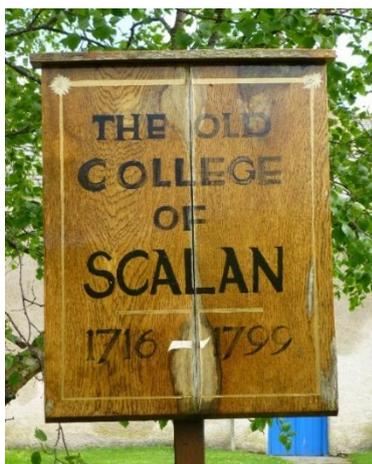
Date of visit: 21 May 2019.



This is Scalan College. Solitary and very effectively screened by a fine stand of trees it lies in a remote spot known as the Braes of Glenlivet, in the uplands of south Banffshire. Surrounded by a circle of barren hills and exposed to severe winter weather this is an inhospitable place. Despite the austere surroundings, perhaps because of them, Scalan operated as a secret Roman Catholic seminary for most of the eighteenth

century; secret because of the persecution directed towards the Roman Catholic Church at the time.

Built to look like a farmhouse, Scalan kept a low profile for over 80 years before moving to Aquhorties (near Inverurie) in 1799 and then to Blairs College in Aberdeen in 1829. Blairs closed as a seminary in 1986 and now houses a museum.



Following the move to Aquhorties, Scalan was abandoned until the mid-1800s when it was converted to a farmhouse but deserted again after just a few years. Today the building is cared for by the Scalan Association, a group of volunteers dedicated to the preservation and promotion of this important relic of Roman Catholic history in Scotland. The Association is the successor to an earlier group led by a parish priest who came to the area in 1945 and who resolved to save and restore the buildings. Given the limited funding available, the Association has done well but is obviously struggling to do more than keep the place wind and watertight. Inside, information boards provide a brief history of the college and visitors quickly appreciate how harsh life must have been for students and instructors.

Happily, the Crown Estate on whose land the building sits is about to carry out an extensive programme of works, including restoration of the mill house and other ancillary buildings which are presently close to collapse.