

Clan Matheson New Zealand

The chair's corner

Greetings to all with an interest in Matheson heritage.

Our Clan Matheson annual meeting in August took a significant step towards a wider involvement in the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society. We had a full discussion about the opportunities this change would provide to all those interested in Matheson heritage.

There was unanimous support for the proposals developed by the committee to:

- move to a non-subscription 'open model' for involvement in the Clan Matheson New Zealand branch
- establish a legal structure for the branch, which is a move from the current informal basis.

The minutes from the annual meeting will be available soon on our [website](#), and will be confirmed at the next meeting.

You will see that meetings have had quite a formal structure in an informal atmosphere. As we move to a more open organisation, it is time to review the format of our annual gathering. What is it we would like to do together, to celebrate together?

This newsletter is the first that will be widely available to all who are interested in finding out about Matheson heritage, Matheson people and places, and making connections with people with similar interests. I trust you will enjoy reading it, and I know that Andrew, the editor, will welcome your comments and especially contributions.

The newsletter can be posted, on a cost-recovery basis, to people who can't access an electronic copy.

Branch committee plan of work

You can find details of the branch committee on the last page of this newsletter. We continue to meet regularly by Zoom so we can keep New Zealand-wide input into branch activities.

The committee is now planning to implement the proposals for the future of Clan Matheson in New Zealand.

Newsletter of the
New Zealand branch of the
Clan Matheson Society

September 2021

Issue 164

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Connecting people with Matheson heritage



Chair's corner ...

Our work programme includes to:

- encourage and support involvement in the branch
- make the most of the website and Facebook group
- establish a legal structure for the branch
- update financial arrangements
- strengthen connections with other organisations that are of interest to those with Matheson heritage
- develop a new approach to our annual gathering.

Read more about the clan's planning for the future in this newsletter or on the website. Please contact me if you have comments or suggestions.

**We are moving away from subscriptions
to an open model for involvement in the
Clan Matheson New Zealand branch**

There is an opportunity for you or a family member to be supported to find out more about Matheson heritage or Scottish culture and customs in New Zealand. The branch has established a small grant to foster interest in our Matheson family heritage. It's time to make an application, so find out about the grant scheme [here](#).

I trust that you and your whanau are well and have managed during the latest round of difficult times as we all feel the impact of the pandemic as well as the severe storms that have hit some areas.

I look forward to meeting and getting to know more New Zealand Mathesons in the year ahead.

Lena Orum

Chair, Clan Matheson New Zealand branch

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Clan Matheson New Zealand

www.clanmatheson.org.nz

[www.facebook.com/groups/
ClanMathesonNewZealand](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ClanMathesonNewZealand)



A new approach for Clan Matheson in New Zealand

by Lena Orum

The New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society held its annual meeting in August 2021, and endorsed a new model for the branch to trial for two years. This open model will enable all who have Matheson heritage and an interest in their Scottish heritage to be more involved.

Purpose

The purpose of the branch is to:

- foster interest in Matheson heritage, Matheson people and places
- support connections among people with similar interests.

Involvement

Anyone who is interested in Matheson heritage can be involved in the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society. The branch will not be a membership-based organisation, and subscriptions will not be collected.

Newsletter

The newsletter will continue as a significant branch resource, and will be available free to anyone who signs up to receive an electronic copy. It will also be able to be downloaded from the website.

A printed copy of the newsletter will be posted to those who do not want to receive it electronically. The printed copy will be charged for, at cost.

Website

The branch website will be used more actively. Work is already under way to make it more attractive and easy to access. The newsletter will be better integrated with the website.

Facebook group

The Clan Matheson New Zealand Facebook group will continue to be used to share information and profile branch activities.

Annual gathering

The annual gathering will continue. We are thinking about how to make its content of interest to a wider group of Mathesons.

As is the case now, Mathesons are free to organise local or regional get-togethers under the Clan Matheson banner.

Committee

A committee will continue to be elected at the annual gathering.

Finances

The committee will investigate sponsorship, and paid advertising in the newsletter and website, as alternative income sources. There are sufficient funds for the branch to continue its activities while these alternatives are being set up.

We welcome any financial support for our work, whether a one-off donation or a regular payment to replace your annual subscription. The Clan Matheson Society New Zealand branch bank account is 03 1559 0103339 00.

Legal status of the branch

The committee has started work to implement the agreement from the annual meeting to establish a legal entity for the branch.

This is most likely to be a trust that is incorporated as a charitable trust board. The committee will then seek to have this charitable trust board registered as a charity. This legal status will provide a structure for the protection of the branch's funds, and will be needed in order to gain sponsorship or other financial support.

The future structure for Clan Matheson New Zealand branch will still be as part of the international Clan Matheson Society, that is recognised by the Chief of Clan Matheson.

An ancestral search

Pinpointing one Matheson's Scottish paternal ancestral genetic homeland

A Scottish case study by Rodger Matheson

For over 50 years my extended family have been trying to trace our ancestors beyond my grandfather. We have been unable to obtain a copy of his birth certificate, or any records of his parents who are named on his death certificate. We have been unable to find any records of his parents entering or leaving New Zealand.

The Matheson surname is associated exclusively with Scotland. The dominance of exclusively Scottish surnames among my closest recurring genetic matches in a Y-DNA STR database confirms that my most recent paternal ancestral origin was within Scotland.

Farmers with each surname can be found in early census data concentrated in the area where their surname first appeared.

For over 50 years my extended family have been trying to trace our ancestors beyond my grandfather

In desperation I decided to reach out to others to see if they could throw some light on my origins — and even as to whether I am a Matheson. I allowed them access to my DNA records, and here are my conclusions based on their report.

Roughly 1,000 years ago, one's direct medieval male ancestor, the first for example to take the Matheson surname, was living near others who he was related to, but who took other surnames like Campbell, Crawford and Stewart.

Early 19th century census data demonstrates that Scottish surnames could still be found concentrated in the areas from which they originated. You can therefore use census data to determine the origin of the surnames that appear in a person's Y-DNA results, identifying an area common to all, and reveal one's 'paternal ancestral genetic homeland.'

In my own DNA, the only Mathesons that have shown up are my first cousins. This only means that other Mathesons with similar DNA have not taken a test and published their results. The most common names with similar DNA are Stewart, Campbell, Crawford, Hatfield and Shattock.



Rodger representing Clan Matheson at a Highland games

An ancestral search ...

The 1841 census reveals the existence of at least 11 distinct groups of Matheson farmers spread throughout Scotland. My paternal ancestry is potentially connected to one of these 11 Scottish locations.

My Y-DNA revealed surname matches as a snapshot of the surnames that arose among my ancestor's relatives or neighbours. This reveals where my Scottish Matheson paternal ancestor once lived, and the most likely area according to the testing service I used is the southwest of Scotland.

Taking a closer look at this data, the villages of Sanquhar and Dumfries are surrounded by surnames that appear in my closest Y-DNA most recent paternal ancestral origin.

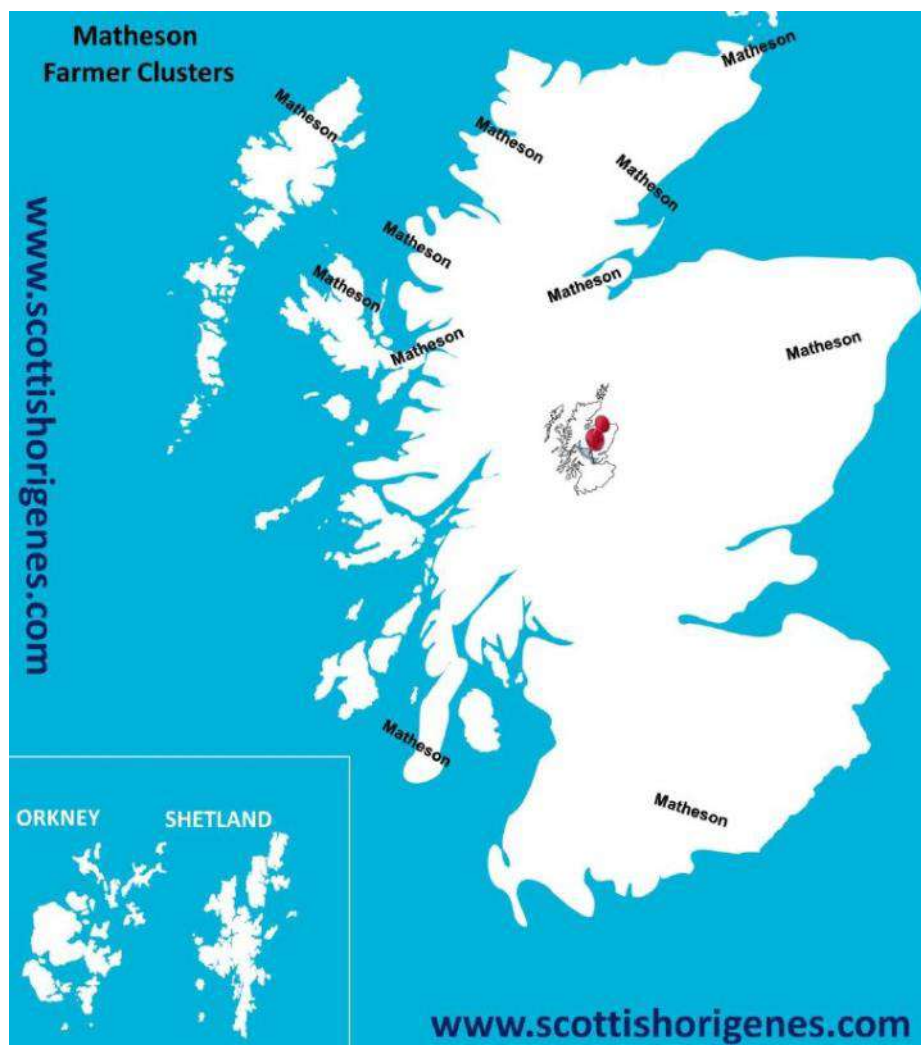
The parish of Closeburn in Dumfriesshire, which lies in the Nith River Valley, is my Scottish paternal ancestral genetic homeland.

I am happy with the money spent.
Summarising 11 pages of data and maps:

My family ancestry is Scottish.
(My brothers played the bagpipes, and my sister Highland danced.)

My family were farmers.
(My grandparents were farmers, and we believe my grandfather's parents were too.)

I now have another area and parishes to continue looking in for documents linking my family back to Scotland.



A Matheson family gathering

By Graeme Matheson

Our wider family had organised a gathering in Blenheim to say goodbye to daughter Pip and her family, who were moving to London for three years.

The weather tried its best to disrupt our plans, with heavy rain and flooding in Marlborough. Ellen and I travelled up from Christchurch and other family were coming from Greytown and Wellington. Most made it, but unfortunately Pip's husband Jim could not fly in because of the weather and because he was flying out on the Monday ahead of the family.



Not a fan of the pipes

The family gathering was also an early celebration for my 80th birthday with our 10 grandchildren and their parents: Pip and four children; Jacqui, Mark and their two children; Hamish and Sarah with their four children.

All these children have Matheson in their names either as a surname or middle name — something I had forgotten about.

We celebrated my actual birthday in Christchurch along with 40 friends just before the lockdown. The surprise was that one of our friends had organised a piper and we were entertained for half an hour. This was a wonderful surprise.

One of our grandsons can't stand too much noise so stood with his hands over his ears, the only one who did not ask for more tunes.

All our 10 grandchildren have Matheson in their names either as a surname or middle name



Graeme's birthday cake was adorned with a photo taken in 2007 in Mongolia, during a Peking to Paris car rally



Kiwi Mathesons

by Lena Orum

For parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles

Mathesons are among many migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand who joined the first migrants, the Māori people. Māori have been settling, telling stories about and shaping the land of our country for many centuries.

Kiwi Mathesons have stories to tell about our families and our clan that links us to Scotland and New Zealand. Some of our stories are about the reasons for and experiences of the migration to New Zealand. Clan Matheson New Zealand has shared many of these stories in the newsletter and on the website, especially about Mathesons' lives in New Zealand. All these stories show how our past has helped shape who we are today.

The draft Aotearoa New Zealand Histories school curriculum includes an example to guide students' inquiry into migration and mobility with these questions.

'How and why did the ancestors of Māori navigate to Aotearoa New Zealand? What are the origin and settlement stories of particular groups who have moved to Aotearoa New Zealand?'

Mathesons have very interesting stories to tell. Perhaps a visit to the 1 January 2022 Highland games at Waipu would be an opportunity to hear stories about the migration of many Matheson families to New Zealand.

In New Zealand schools the New Zealand Curriculum states that children are supported to "be positive in their own identity" and to "understand and respect diverse viewpoints, values, customs and languages".

In our families we can share our family stories and learn about the culture and stories of Scotland with our children.

Please share in the newsletter your ideas of activities that young people might like too. The following article about guising and Halloween is one example. Here is another.

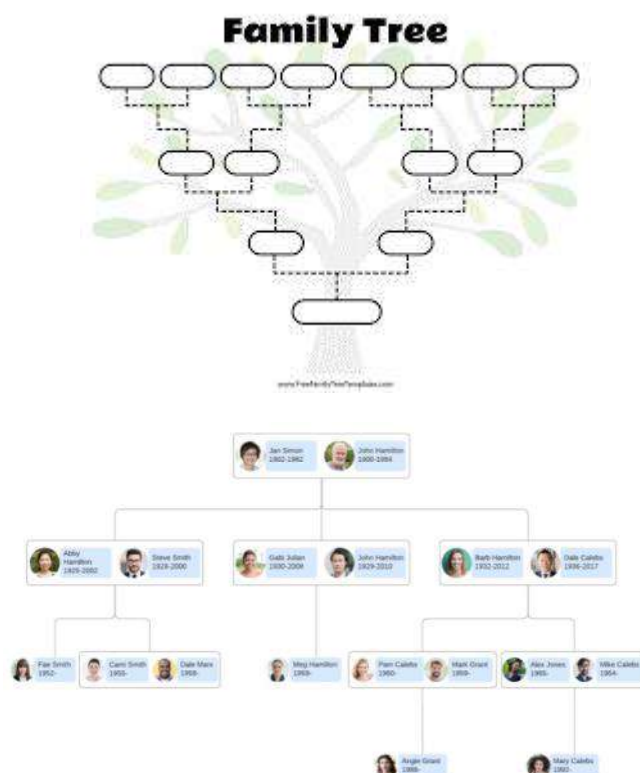
For young people: family tree

Talk to your parents, aunts and uncles and grandparents. Find out their names and perhaps their dates of birth. Find out all the names you can — although sometimes a family tree will have missing parts on the branches. You might find out about these branches later.

Draw up a tree — perhaps it will be a tall Scots pine or a wide tōtara tree.

Put your name on the trunk and any sisters and brothers alongside then all the other names of parents and grandparents above. Perhaps you can paste photos on your tree.

Just google family tree templates for kids and choose one your family would like as a model.



Halloween and guising in Scotland

By Lena Orum

Halloween or Hallowe'en takes its name from All Hallows' Eve, the night before the Christian festival of All Hallows or All Saints Day.

However, it's possible to trace its beginnings back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (Samhuinn in Gaelic), held on 1 November, which marked the culmination of summer and the harvest period with the onset of winter.

Guising or 'galoshin'

Guising is an old-fashioned Halloween tradition from Scotland. Instead of trick-or-treating, children would literally disguise themselves as evil spirits by blackening their faces and dressing in old clothes to go guising. According to folklore, this was so that they could venture out safely without being detected by wicked ghouls.

Guisers also couldn't simply knock on the doors of their neighbours yelling 'trick-or-treat' and expect sweets in return. They had to perform a 'trick' first by reciting a song, poem or joke before being rewarded with goodies.

This information comes from a fascinating [blog post](#), which contains plenty more about Scottish Halloween traditions.



Carved turnip lanterns in Scotland

Here are some great [photos](#) of traditional guisers in the 1930s, on the island of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland.

The use of pumpkins at Halloween is actually an American invention, and in Scotland it has been custom to carve lanterns out of 'neeps' or turnips.

Send your guising stories and photos to our editor for our next newsletter.



Traditional guising in Scotland

Family history research

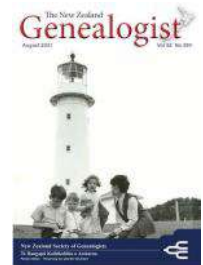
by Andrew Matheson

Magazines

Trawling through websites can be a great way of tapping into other people's family history research, but wouldn't it be great if people did the digging for you and presented curated results of their work?

Well, they have. In this digital age it's easy to forget about old-fashioned magazines, but family history magazines can alert you to a lot of helpful information. And even if not all of the material is relevant to your quest for ancestors and other relatives, it's interesting just to learn how others have gone about their work.

With Scottish ancestors, UK magazines are the first place to start. Two monthly publications dominate the market: [Who do you think you are?](#) and [Family Tree](#).



Each magazine is linked to a website and Facebook page, and in one case links to a TV series of the same name. You can subscribe to paper or digital copies, or borrow these from many libraries. Their websites have free articles as 'teasers', and links to useful sites.

The [New Zealand Genealogist](#) is published every two months by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists. It's sent to members and is available in many libraries.

Sneak preview

In the next issue we'll look at online family history databases. Many require a subscription, though access is often free at your local library. Because of lockdown disruptions, many libraries are offering free access to Ancestry.com from home until the end of 2021. Check out your library's website.

Certificate or printout?

An important tool for family history research in New Zealand are the [historical records](#) available online for births, deaths and marriages. You can search online for:

- births that occurred at least 100 years ago and stillbirths that occurred at least 50 years ago,
- marriages that occurred 80 years ago,
- deaths that occurred at least 50 years ago, or for which the deceased's date of birth was at least 80 years ago.

You can search the entries at no cost, and careful searching can yield valuable results.

At times you need to bite the bullet and pay for a full record. This isn't cheap, at \$25 for a printout and \$33 for a certificate, but this can sometimes be crucial for breaking through a brick wall in your research. But which product should you order?

You're best to get a printout. This is a copy of the information from the registration, and can be either handwritten or typed. Not only is a printout cheaper, it has more information than is included on a certificate so is much more suitable for research purposes. Certificates are needed for official purposes, such as dealing with estates, but aren't the right choice for family history research.

A Matheson responds in Wild West Auckland

by Rodger Matheson

It's 2 am on Tuesday 31 August when the phone started to ring and the pager went off. The calls were going out to Logan Matheson, a clan member and team leader of the West Auckland Response Team ([NZ-RT3](#)).

Now awake, he rolled over and realised he had only 30 minutes to have his team and truck on the road. Little did he know what he would be facing over the next five days.

At 8:15pm on Monday night, and over the next 12 hours, West Auckland was hit with one and half times the amount of rain that would normally fall in the whole month of August. The resulting floods had not been seen in the previous 40 years.

Due to his father not answering his phone Logan called on him, but I believe it was to gather up all the biscuits and chocolate bars so he could feed his team.

I caught up with him on Saturday night, and even though he was facing a roast lamb dinner he was not interested in food but just wanted to talk about what he had seen.

All their training over the years was once again put to good use. These boys are all volunteers.



In the first instance when deployed, Logan's team's aim is to preserve life, record the circumstance of individuals and families, and report to Auckland Council. His second job is to provide welfare to those in need. The latter continued until Saturday.

Even though the trust's vehicle is well equipped to handle any situation, it was met with water lapping the doors and some roads were impassable due to slips. With no state of emergency declared by the Auckland Council or the government, their job was made harder.



News and events

Clan Matheson international gathering



More than 60 people with Clan Matheson links got together in July to take part in the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina, USA. Clan Matheson was the 'honoured clan', and the clan's chief, Sir Alexander Matheson, was to have been chief of the whole games.

Unfortunately, covid travel restrictions prevented Sir Alexander and his family from taking part. Nevertheless, a large group of people with Matheson connections from around the country took part in the clan gathering and dinner, visited the clan tent and marched in the parade of tartans.

The chief is planning an international Clan Matheson gathering in Scotland in a year or two's time. Look out for details here as plans are made. Many people will be well overdue for some international travelling by then, and a trip to Scotland would be a suitable drawcard.



Highland games in New Zealand

The 11th **Hororata** Highland Games, due to be held in November 2021, has been cancelled. The organisers reluctantly made this call in late September, because they need the certainty of covid alert level 1 to make it feasible to run the games and attract visitors. Look out for these games next year!

The 150th **Waipu** Highland Games will be on 1 January 2022. Given that last year's had to be postponed, and 150 is a large round number, it would be well worth checking the games out this summer.

The 158th **Turakina** Highland Games will be on Saturday 29 January 2022, with the official opening the previous evening. This is New Zealand's oldest festival of Scottish sports, music and dance.

The 29th **Paeroa** Highland Games will be in February 2022.

Look out for Rodger Matheson in the Clan Matheson tent at many of these events.



How to connect with us

Clan Matheson Society New Zealand Branch

Our objectives are to:

- foster an interest in Matheson heritage
- forge links between people in New Zealand with Matheson heritage, and between them and kinsfolk in other countries
- help people with Matheson heritage find out more about their family history and family stories



New Zealand branch website

www.clanmatheson.org.nz

International clan website

www.clanmatheson.org

Newsletter

news@clanmatheson.org.nz

Website

web@clanmatheson.org.nz

News	news@clanmatheson.org.nz
Family history	web@clanmatheson.org.nz
Website	web@clanmatheson.org.nz
Secretary	secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz
Chair	chair@clanmatheson.org.nz

Clan Matheson New Zealand committee 2021 – 2022

Lena Orum (Chair and secretary)	Auckland
Doug Hayr (treasurer)	Auckland
Andrew Matheson (news editor)	Wellington
Graeme Matheson	Christchurch
Rodger Matheson	Auckland
Wayne Matheson	Queenstown

Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand

Andrew Matheson

Chief's Deputy Lieutenants for New Zealand

Blair Matheson

Graeme Matheson

Support our work

The New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society has moved away from a formal membership model. You don't have to pay a subscription to receive the newsletter, or to share your interest in Matheson heritage with others.

We welcome any support you can provide, whether a one-off donation or a regular payment just as you used to support us with an annual subscription.

Bank account:

Clan Matheson Society New Zealand branch

03 1559 0103339 00

To sign up to receive our quarterly newsletter, please email secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz.