

Connecting People with Matheson Heritage

Meet the new chair: Blair Matheson

Fàilte oirbh! A welcome to you!

Where I am Spring has sprung and hopefully for you all too, its still cold and wet but all the signs are there about the change in seasons. At our last AGM in Auckland there were also some changes in your clan society. Donald and Douglas Matheson become honorary life members for their service to the Clan, John-Henry Wilson is our new piper, I have become the new chair and of course we affirmed Andrew Matheson as the new Chief's Lieutenant. Exciting times!

Since its inception in NZ the Clan has played a part in my life and I have had the honour of attending Clan gatherings in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Plockton in Scotland.



A lone piper at Cows Pass on the way to Applecross



Plockton from the air



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Meet the new chair (continued)

Hosting 3 clan Chiefs over that time has also created Clan interest. These events have helped develop a healthy appetite for all things Scottish and seeing Clan Matheson flourish as a means of keeping the culture alive in New Zealand. It is always good to know we are part of a worldwide association linked through family connections.

I look forward to serving the

Clan in this role and hope you enjoy some of differences the new office holders will bring to their positions.

Lang may your lum reek (Long may your chimney smoke).

Blair Matheson



“We are part of a worldwide association linked through family connections”



Doug Matheson with the locals near Plockton

Thank you Donald

At the last Clan Matheson New Zealand Society AGM Donald Matheson retired from his role as Chair of the society and as editor of this newsletter.

Donald also was awarded life membership of the society in recognition of his great contributions over the years.

Thank you Donald for your great work for the society over the years and for sharing so much of your knowledge with us. We have big shoes to fill!

You can read more about Donald's story on page 4. 2

A new editor and a new look

Welcome to the new look newsletter

Hello! Kia ora! Fàilte!

It is my honour to take up the role of editing this newsletter. My name is Lara Penman and I am the proud daughter of a daughter of a Matheson lass. I am from the branch of Mathesons that left the Isle of Lewis in Scotland for New Zealand in 1866. I am so pleased I have been able to connect with the people and places of my Matheson heritage in New Zealand and in Scotland.

I hope this newsletter will help others to do the same.

I aim to get the newsletter out to you every three months (September, December, March, June).

Please contact me if you have any feedback about the new look. You can send your stories, news and photos to me at:

- news@clanmatheson.org.nz
- 34 Bosun Terrace, Whitby, Porirua, 5024

I look forward to hearing and sharing your stories.

Lara Penman

We want to hear your stories!

Stories are a powerful way of connecting us to each other and to history, so I would love to share your Matheson stories in this newsletter. They could be anything from stories about your ancestors, to stories of migration, to stories of Matheson places, to your own story about discovering your Matheson heritage. They can be a paragraph or a page, whatever you feel comfortable sharing.

Hopefully we can inspire you to think about your Matheson connections.

Connecting with the place and the people

Walking with my mum and aunt through the Calanais Standing Stones on Lewis, Scotland.



Imagining life for our ancestors at the Garrannan Blackhouse Village on Lewis.

Life member stories: Donald Matheson

It is quite different writing for a newsletter instead of actually writing it, but when our new newsletter editor, Lara, suggested I reminisce with an article I thought why not? During my years as newsletter editor I have cajoled others to write something for the newsletter. Now I did not wish to remain in the silent few, so here goes.

It was only when ex-secretary and founder member Ailsa Matheson entered an item in the North Shore Times way back in 1989 calling all Mathesons to meet with the intention of forming a New Zealand Branch of the Clan Matheson Society that the subject of Scottish ancestry in my family cropped up.



Donald and son Stuart at John O'Groats

“How come we are Scottish?”

Several members of my family attended the meeting. My son Stuart who was born in NZ, raised the question: how come we are Scottish? He noted I was born in Germany; my parents were members of the BAOR British Army of Occupation of the Rhine in Germany after WWI.

So, next question. Where was my father born? London was the answer. Ok, so where (me starting to worry) was grandfather born? The answer, Waterloo (ouch). Then we discovered Waterloo was the name of the house in Dingwall Scotland, not the railway station Waterloo in London. Granddad was unable to obtain work in Dingwall so travelled to London to join the London Metropolitan Police Force,

and that was why my father was born in London. Wiping the perspiration from my brow I went back further in research and found my great grandfather was married in 1822, in Bottacks a suburb of Dingwall, establishing our ancestry.

My first visit to Scotland occurred when I was 6 years old. We were living in Farnborough, Aldershot in England, and Dad was on leave from the Army. He took the family by car to visit his father in Dingwall.



Dingwall Town Hall

Life member stories: Donald Matheson (cont)

I well remember that visit for two reasons. One, when my older brother Rod and I found a small outhouse for animals. Inside we discovered a lady milking a cow, seeing us, she directed a stream of hot milk to our faces and that's when I learnt where milk came from.

Two, my father took us to John O'Groats, at the tip of Scotland; we arrived there and dropped into a hotel for refreshments. Looking down the long bar I saw an old gentleman with a long white beard sitting there. I whispered to my Dad, "Is that John O Groats?" He replied "yes my son, hold still till I approach him and ask if you can meet him." He must have tipped the wink to the old man as he beckoned me to join him and standing greeted me and shook my hand. I really believed I had shook hands with John O Groats, even being reluctant to wash my hands later.



Map showing Dingwall and John O'Groats in Scotland

“I really believed I had shook hands with John O'Groats.”

I next travelled to Scotland at the age of 10 to enrol in Queen Victoria Military School in Dunblane Perthshire. I was the Senior Monitor when I left the School at 16 to enrol into the RAF apprentice scheme for 3 years and then adult service for 12 years. During which I served time in Iraq, Germany and Austria.

During my years in the RAF I met and married my late wife Pamela. Before marriage I visited Pam's parents seeking their permission to marry their daughter. Both Mother and Father were happy to agree but asked me to try to bring Pam to New Zealand when my RAF contract expired. They were shortly to immigrate to NZ to join Pam's sister, Irene, who resided there. On leaving the RAF I joined the RNZAF & travelled with my family to NZ.

I have revisited Scotland several times. Twice to Clan Matheson International Gatherings, the first time accompanied by my sister Sylvia, brother Rod & my daughter Ginette. It was a lovely trip held mainly in Lochalsh with a visit to the Isle of

Skye. Also it enabled us to visit the home of our ancestors in Dingwall. The second time I was accompanied by my son Stuart. It was Stuart's first visit to Scotland and he enjoyed it immensely. Besides visiting Dingwall and Lochalsh, we went to John O'Groats. Sadly the old man was not there, he had found another bar.

I hope you liked this item. Next newsletter I will reminisce on Clan history.

Donald Matheson

Changes to the committee

Many thanks to outgoing committee members for their contributions over the years:

- Donald Matheson
- Doug Matheson
- Lois Ahlquist

Welcome to the new committee members (see page 12 for more details), and to the new clan piper John-Henry Wilson (pictured).



The minutes of the annual meeting will be published on the branch's website www.clanmatheson.org.nz

Clan Matheson Society members meet: the New Zealand AGM

Clan members and supporters gathered in Auckland on 8 July for the annual meeting of the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society. The meeting was well attended and successful, and some landmark events took place.

Two stalwarts of the New Zealand branch were awarded life membership. At the meeting Donald Matheson stood down from all his roles after 17 years as chairman, newsletter editor for 10, and committee member since the branch's formation in 1989. Douglas (Doug) Matheson stood down after having served nearly 20 years on the committee and a term as chair. Doug and Donald have both worked to represent the New Zealand branch both in Scottish society events in New Zealand and Clan Matheson activities internationally.

Donald is profiled in this issue of the newsletter, and Doug will be in a future issue. We are grateful for their continued commitment to fostering Matheson heritage and connections.

Blair Matheson accepted the role of chair of the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society, and has written an introduction to this issue of the newsletter.

After several years with no piper, following Norman Matheson stepping down, the branch has a piper in John-Henry Wilson. He is the grandson of a clan member, and is committed to developing his musical skills and involvement. It was great to have him play at the meeting.

Lois Ahlquist stepped down from the committee after nearly 20 years of service, and we thank her for her commitment to the branch.

The Chief of Clan Matheson, Sir Alexander Matheson of Matheson, 8th Baronet of Lochalsh, sent his greetings and best wishes to the branch. He expressed his thanks to everyone for their interest in the clan, and particularly to those who, despite having busy lives, devote time to the society. He looks forward to meeting New Zealand members of the Clan Matheson Society who visit the UK.

Andrew Matheson

A piece of New Zealand growing in Scotland: Alex Matheson

The scenic fishing village of Plockton on the shores of Loch Carron is the birthplace of Mathesons, many of whom emigrated to all parts of the world last century. My father, Alexander Matheson, was born in one of those picturesque cottages on Bank Street in 1898 and as a teenager left home in 1916 to join the Royal Navy.



Bank St Plockton, Scotland

In the great war of 1914-1918 he was a key crewman on Q ships in the North Sea. These ships were disguised as normal merchant vessels but were in fact decoys that would attract the German U boats to the surface, giving the merchant vessel the chance to attack. This was a very dangerous occupation and as a consequence many lives were lost. Thankfully my father came through this experience and being a fluent Gaelic speaker finally settled in Dunedin. He passed away in 1962.

As a young boy I lived with stories of Plockton village, so my wife and I visited there in 1975. On our way to Plockton we had some time in London and one day on the footpath adjacent to Hyde Park an artist had a painting of the Plockton shoreline showing 'palm trees' dotted

along beside the road near the loch. Thinking at the time how ridiculous to paint trees of that type in the picture we did not purchase it. That is now a regret as it was very beautifully painted.

Imagine our surprise in a few days when visiting Plockton we found those trees growing healthily as depicted. Surprise still to see that they were New Zealand cabbage or Cordyline trees!



NZ Cabbage trees in Plockton

A piece of New Zealand growing in Scotland (cont)

Coming forward now to 2018 my wife and I were recently at a social evening in New Plymouth and when chatting to a gentleman, who also has a Scottish heritage, found that he had recently visited Plockton. I happened to mention our story of the cabbage trees with the response that it was in fact his father who had raised the cabbage trees in his nursery in New Plymouth and arranged their planting many years ago in Plockton. His father was a principal in the successful nursery business of Duncan and Davies, based in New Plymouth.

“It is satisfying to know that these New Zealand native trees further enhance the coastline of this beautiful Scottish village.”

It is satisfying to know that these New Zealand native trees further enhance the coastline of this beautiful Scottish village.

Alex R. Matheson QSM JP
New Plymouth

Ailsa Matheson

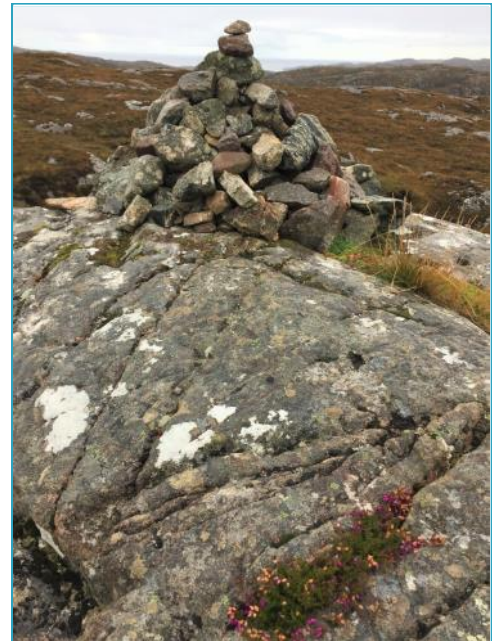
We are sorry to report the death on 12 September of Ailsa Matheson. She was one of the founders of the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society and an active supporter for many years. We extend our sympathy to Ailsa's family and many friends.

Ailsa was a great contributor to this newsletter. Her last contribution was to send in this article from her brother Alex. The next newsletter will carry a fuller tribute to Ailsa.

Connecting with Matheson places and people: Lara Penman

In September 2017 I was lucky enough to spend two weeks driving around Scotland exploring the places of my Matheson heritage. I was doubly lucky as I got to share that adventure with two other Matheson lasses: my mum (Isobel Murphy) and my auntie (Lena Orum), who are daughters of Gladys Orum nee Matheson.

We hoped that the trip would help us to imagine what life was like for our ancestors before they left for the other side of the world in the 1860s.



We added a stone to a cairn on the land of our ancestors

“We were on a mission to get a feel for the land and to find the old croft house.”

We are indebted to the generosity of others who have shared their research of our family heritage stories to help us decide where to visit. In particular, Andrew Matheson’s book “Highland heritage: four Scottish families and their migration stories” (2011) was the ultimate resource for us. Thank you Andrew!

While we had some great adventures all through Scotland and some special moments on Lewis and Harris, the highlight for all three of us was the few days we spent in the tiny fishing village of Lochinver.

Our ancestors were farmers on Croft 67 at Baddidaroch, near Lochinver. We were on a mis-

sion to get a feel for the land and to find the old croft house.

We found a day walk from Baddidaroch over the hills to the beautiful white sand Achmelvich Beach. We spent a glorious day getting to know the land our ancestors made their living from.

The land is old Lewisian gneiss stone base covered in black peat, purple heathers, red grasses, bright green mosses and mountain-top pools and lakes. The colours of the highlands become more vibrant and complex the closer you look, so we were having a ball taking it all in. We even had 6 deer follow us for a few km.

We all fell in love with the land.



The map of our heritage trip to Scotland.

The key places where our direct Matheson ancestors lived were:

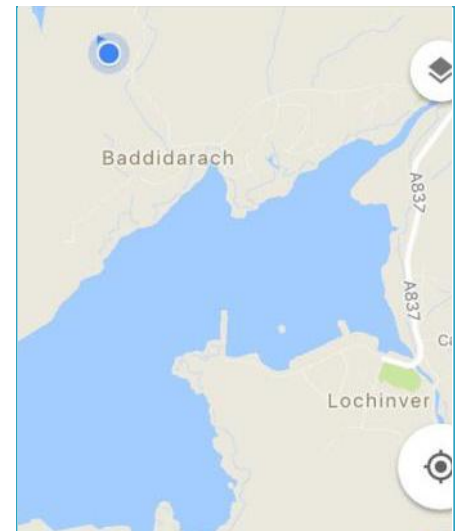
B: Lochinver

C: Lewis

Connecting with Matheson places and people (continued)

Intensely wild and beautiful, yet very little area for stock to graze, the land could not possibly hold much scope for more than subsistence farming. We could see that the land could not support a growing family and population and why my great great grandfather, Norman McLeod Matheson, decided to emigrate.

The next day we went hunting for Croft 67. As the streets and house numbers do not correspond with the croft numbering system it was going to take some work to find the place. Thanks to Andrew we had some photos and tips to help our search. We drove up and down tiny roads, knocked on a number of doors until we found a woman who knew the old croft numbering system and worked out the street address. We were so pleased to



Once we finally found the croft house I recorded our location to help the next Matheson adventurers find it.

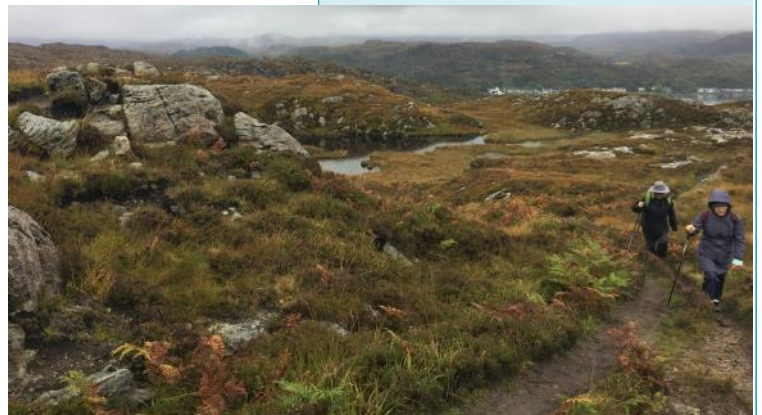
“We imagine that our ancestors were brave, resourceful and hopeful.”

We drove to the address and found it was the house we had walked past the day before at the start of our day walk in the hills. The house is now called 67 Darroch House. When I knocked on the door the chap in his PJs was not sufficiently impressed by our story of travelling halfway around the world to see this house to actually let us in to have a look around. Oh well, we got a few photos from the outside and were very content.



Me at our ancestral house, Lochinver

In my family we imagine that our ancestors must have been brave, resourceful and hopeful to migrate to New Zealand. In walking where they walked and imagining the difficulties of living off that land 200 odd years ago, we saw that those qualities were also essential for the life they left behind.



Walking with my mum and aunt on the land our Matheson ancestors lived on in Lochinver.

We had a wonderful Matheson heritage adventure. Mission accomplished!

Lara Penman

Matheson news

Auckland

The New Zealand Society of Genealogists has a Scottish Interest Group.

There's even a subgroup with a special focus on those Scots who went to Nova Scotia before coming to New Zealand (mostly in the 1850s).

The group meets at the NZSG's family research centre in Panmure, Auckland. For more information see www.genealogy.org.nz/Scottish_210.aspx

Wellington

A Wellington Scottish Interest Group meets monthly at Victoria University. The university is just the venue -- no university connection is needed - - and not even any Scottish blood, just an interest in things Scottish. Their monthly meetings (mostly talks) cover a wide range of eclectic topics.

Events

Scottish Clans Association AGM (at 4.30pm) and Annual Dinner (at 6pm)

Saturday 15 September 2018

Quality Hotel, 10-20 Gladstone Rd, Parnell, Auckland.

Come and enjoy our annual Scottish Clans Dinner for 2018. A great night, great food with lots of Scottish music, dancing, eloquent speeches and Scottish bonhomie.

All welcome.

Hororata Highland Games, Canterbury

Saturday 10 November 2018

Calling all mainland Mathesons and those interested in all things Scottish. Come and join us for a fun day. You are welcome to parade with us under the Matheson banner in the closing ceremony.

For more information go to www.hororatahighlandgames.org.nz



Join Rodger Matheson at the Matheson site in Clan Alley. Keep an eye out for our banner

Auckland Highland Games, Ellerslie Events Centre

Saturday 17 November 2018

Join in a fun day of all things Scottish.

For more information go to www.aucklandhighlandgames.wordpress.com/

Clan Matheson Society New Zealand Branch

If you are a Matheson, Mathieson, Mathison (and other variants of the name) by birth, kinship, maternal descent or marriage, why not become a member of the New Zealand Clan Society and enjoy the benefits of friendship, fraternity and family history



New Zealand branch website

www.clanmatheson.org.nz

International Clan website

www.clanmatheson.org

Membership

membership@clanmatheson.org.nz

Newsletter

news@clanmatheson.org.nz

How to connect with us

| | |
|--|---|
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| Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand | Andrew Matheson |
| Chief's Deputy Lieutenants for New Zealand | Blair Matheson Graeme Matheson |
| Secretary | Chris Binns secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz |
| Treasurer | Doug Hayr |
| News editor | Lara Penman news@clanmatheson.org.nz |
| Webmaster and genealogist | Andrew Matheson web@clanmatheson.org.nz |

Join the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society to connect with others who share your common Highland heritage.

You will receive a copy of our quarterly newsletters and be invited to clan events. You will also be able to use the services of our clan genealogist, for help with your family history.

If you want to find out about membership or to join the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society, please go to www.clanmatheson.org.nz/join-us/

Don't forget to re-subscribe for this year.