

Connecting People with Matheson Heritage



Help shape the future of Clan Matheson NZ

Greetings Clan Matheson NZ. I hope you are all enjoying these winter months and staying warm. A wee reminder about the Clan Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held:

- On Sunday, 21st July 2019, 1pm - 4pm (note the change of date)
- At the Logan Campbell Room at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, Manurewa, Auckland.

It would be great to see as many there as possible for several reasons. Firstly, it is always good to catch up with fellow Mathesons. Secondly, to move forward as a relevant vibrant organisation there are some good discussions to be had. Please read and digest the following discussion points so that we can all share thoughts and contribute to ways forward at the meeting:

What is the purpose of the NZ branch? What are our goals and what will we do to achieve those goals?

How can we improve the membership process?

- Should we have recurring automatic payment or direct debit so that it takes action not to renew, rather than action to renew?
- Should the committee members be advised of members and new memberships so they can welcome new members in their area, and organise local events?

How can we improve the organisation of the NZ branch?

- The committee already has Clan email addresses.
- What is the ideal size for the committee?

Inside this issue

Help shape the future of
Clan Matheson NZ

Blair Matheson 1

Life member stories: Donald
Scott

Malcolm Scott 3

Crowd sourcing a new family
history resource

Andrew Matheson 6

Gold, birth and death

Jeanette Brunton 7

The missing link

Rodger Matheson 10

Musings from the editor

Lara Penman 11

Clan Matheson international
gathering 12

How to connect 13



Help shape the future of Clan Matheson NZ (cont)

Events/products: Should we develop an ideas bank so all members are supported in organising mini-events in different parts of the country?

What other benefits of membership can we offer? Outreach? Scholarship? Support/philanthropy?

How can we improve our networking with other branches? What is our connection to the global Clan Matheson?

Can we develop an electronic archive of all newsletters, AGM minutes and other important documents?

So there is a lot to talk about! Come along, share your ideas, meet fellow Mathesons. See you there on 21st July.

Blair Matheson

Chair, Clan Matheson Society NZ



Clan Matheson Society NZ Annual Meeting: 21 July in Auckland—all welcome!



The Logan Campbell Room

You can find a map to the Auckland Botanical Gardens and the Logan Campbell room at

www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/visit-us/map/



Life member stories: Donald Scott

As son of Donald Scott, to be asked by Clan Matheson Society New Zealand to provide an insight into the life of our father is of immense pleasure and honour.

Clan Matheson knew our father as Donald Scott, his full name being Athol Donald Scott. From childhood he was known as Don but he was happy to be called Donald. Family history goes that his father Athol Brougham Scott registered him as Athol Donald but his first name was supposed to be Donald. Such is family history and the wee skeletons that arise.

Dad dedicated a significant part of his life to his own family history and genealogy. But why this interest and what motivated such a passion for knowledge and associated history? To recall the reasons behind this interest casts back to the early 1980s when Dad made a comment to one of his older cousins “that we as a population generally know nothing of our ancestry”. The reality was he knew he was talking about himself and his lack of knowledge of his own family history.



Donald Scott (1934 -2018) previous Clan Matheson Genealogist and life member Clan Matheson Society New Zealand.

“For him it was the feeling of belonging and being part of something far greater than he could ever have considered.”

This led to a casual reply from this cousin “oh you need to meet another cousin in Wellington and she will help you”. This took Dad’s breath away as he knew his immediate family but knew nothing of any direct relatives in Wellington and, as he was to discover, relatives in Westport and in his own city of Palmerston North. He was to meet many new relatives with similar interest and form lifelong friendships.

At this time the interest in family history, Dad thought, was not that common. However he was to find the opposite and that the thirst for discovering family roots was gaining popularity. I can recall that both sets of grandparents were confused as to why people would want to look backwards as their focus was to look to the future and not concern themselves with family history. Nice to know perhaps but don’t ask too many questions. Dad’s thoughts were that unless he did something about

his own family history it would be lost.

The quest for family history and ancestry began and Dad was to meet other close relatives throughout New Zealand. Good fortune of timing would allow him to meet these people as they were aging. They openly talked about the family and described for him life in Nelson and Westport where the Scott side of the family settled in the late 1840s.

When he met relatives for the first time in Westport, he found he could go into a shop and be recognized as a Scott. This was an experience that I too encountered but do not think Dad could fully fathom. We had never lived in Westport yet were recognized by face. For him it was the feeling of belonging and being part of something far greater than he could ever have considered. To say this was an emotional time for him would be an understatement.

Life member stories: Donald Scott (cont)

The search for family history took Dad to the UK and in particular Scotland. He spent time researching, meeting with newly discovered relatives, visiting locations where our ancestors farmed and raised their families. It was in Scotland that Dad felt at home. Although New Zealand was home, to him Scotland offered him an understanding of what we are and why we do certain things without thinking. Dad found Scotland so exhilarating with its distinct countryside, flora and fauna.



Donald Scott Scotland 1994 "Scots Heather"

"I suppose the real reason for this record is the realisation of a need for identity; an identity which, to have real meaning, must encompass the past, well beyond one's own birth, as well as the present. It matters not what the dead were, famous or felons, but it does matter they be recovered from oblivion."

Extract from Introduction to SCOTT family History (AD Scott)

The Scots have the sense of humour and mannerisms that Dad could immediately relate to. As a relative in Sutherland shire stated, while we joined them for dinner, "och you are just like us" to which Dad replied "aye where do you think we came from?" The table roared with laughter. This is one delightful Scots memory that Dad would never forget.

Romantic notions of ancestry can easily take hold, and while Dad was contented knowing a huge amount of direct lineage of both sides of his family, he had an increasing desire to learn about his ancestor's country's history. He especially wanted to understand the social aspect and the past lives of ordinary people. Our ancestors included farmers and trades people and his interest took him to what outside sources moulded their lives. He found some of the places directly associated with his ancestors, as well as some of the historically significant places. History was always a favourite subject at school for

him as was at University where he studied English History.

What then of Clan Matheson Society and where did this fit into Dads greater genealogy interest? Previous discussions with Dad by Clan members may present a different story but our guess is that Dad was drawn to his mother's Gordon and Matheson ancestry. He was raised by his grandparents after his parents divorced when he was a toddler. In later adulthood Dad kindled a mother-son relationship that had been absent for so many years. Dad was so freely giving to others yet held many emotional aspects to himself. After Dad's passing we read letters written to him from his mother which showed us the motherly bond became strong and not as estranged as we may have believed.

Life member stories: Donald Scott (cont)

For us the family ancestry has lines to Scott, Gordon and Matheson Clans. Dad was very proud to be directly involved as Genealogist with Clan Matheson both at International and New Zealand level. It was obvious that Dad, while searching for any linkage in his own family history, would turn his attention to assist others. Dad spent countless hours researching and had a better understanding of ancestry than some professionals.

He found that Census was a great tool as it opened eyes to what families were doing, who worked with them, movement of people and of course confirming some grammar and date errors. Family bibles can hold a treasure of information but as he found they had hand written birth dates and names not as accurate as one would think. With information and Genealogy databases formed Dad could share information and continue to assist others well into the future.

Dad, for a great number of years happily spend his time researching and welcomed the friendships his Clan Matheson research and involvement brought him. Dad was a true volunteer. Ancestry and Genealogy became what he wanted to do with his life and wonderfully fulfilling. He knew though that any work he did must not be lost and emphasized the importance for the Clan to hold copies of data base and research material. This would be important to enable a smooth handover to replacement Genealogists once Dad let go of the reins.

Dad had spent most of his working life as a Radio Technician. He was an honest, modest man with strong convictions. Dad respected others and was in turn well respected. No more could this be demonstrated by the Clan Matheson NZ Society giving Life Membership to Dad in 2010.

In his last years memories faded as Alzheimer's took hold, yet he knew he had the chance to document his story. He assisted many others with theirs and wrote enough of his family history that generations in the future will need not be in the dark as to their roots.

History has a habit of repeating and recently highlighted why family history is of importance. At Dad's funeral in Feb 2018 we read a Burns Poem and arranged a number of Scottish themed music including a lone piper playing Highland Cathedral. One of Dad's cousins asked why such a Scottish connection? I explained briefly and on return to Melbourne promptly emailed our cousin a copy of a journal written by Dad when he first visited Scotland back in 1989. The reply back was 'now I realise' and said they too will take more interest in family history.

"A hobby means doing something for the fun of it, not necessarily to make a living". This would sum up Donald Scott a man who knew where he came from, documented for those that come after him and assisted others discover their own roots.

Malcolm Scott



"It is the past lives of the ordinary people, and my ancestors were ordinary people, and what outside sources moulded those lives which attracted my interest. Therefore, I wanted to see, not just some of the places directly associated with my ancestors, but also some of the historically significant places."

Excerpt written by Donald Scott 1989 Scotland ancestral trip

Crowdsourcing a new family history resource



Donald and Antonie Matheson, Mel's grandparents



Heyber Matheson, Mel's uncle

Photos of Matheson grave-stones in New Zealand

In our last newsletter we introduced a new section on our branch website for photos of headstones, memorial plaques and other items of remembrance for people named Matheson (and variants) in New Zealand cemeteries. We are offering this as a resource for family historians searching for details contained on headstones, and photos for their family history stories.

Unfortunately the website has had a few technical difficulties the last few months, but in the meanwhile we continue our call for clan members to check local records and include cemeteries on their travels, to hunt out Matheson headstones and supply photos. The new section of the website is [here](#).

Many thanks to Mel Matheson from Kamo, who sent in these photos, plus more, of relatives at the Kauri Cemetery, just north of Kamo, Whangarei.

Please send any contributions to web@clanmatheson.org.nz.

Enjoy this treasure hunt!

Andrew Matheson

Gold, birth and death

In the past 30 years I have collected papers, letters, and information from Papers Past about my Mathieson forbears. Also stories from my older relatives. Letters both optimistic and sad, with creative spelling and punctuation, have deepened my appreciation of my whakapapa. I suspect the reason that Alexander's spelling and punctuation was so much worse than that of his much older brothers is that he didn't get much schooling after his mother died and the new step-mother sent all the dependent step-children to live with their older married sister. This story focuses on my great-grandparents.

My great-grandparents, Alexander Mathieson, 22, and Sarah Keltie Dumbrake Liddle, 20, married in Edinburgh in May 1854. They set off for Melbourne from Liverpool on 5 June on a ship, Queen of the East, specially built for the Liverpool to Melbourne run, arriving in September 1854. Alexander, a trained millwright, got a job as a 'sawmiller and Engainear' with a sawmilling company. In 1855 he wrote an enthusiastic letter back to his elder brothers and sisters about prospects for migrants:

'Dear Brothers and sisters I received your letter yesterday with great joyay to hear from the old country and was more happy to hear that you was all in good helth I am very sorrow about Jhon having such a bad summer with his stock an his los of money but I hop he will get over ti all if he cannot get at hom if he comes out hear and try his luck I will doo what lyies in my phour to assist him....

you was inquaing about the ratons an bord of the vessel we got very good butter and sugar and flour and rasons and presarvpathchyes [preservatives?] but the bisket and tea and coffee and beaf was very bad it was as good for us that we brot a stor with us it requires a good dill [deal] for a family plenty kaks or biskate and oatmeal and a ham and cheas and jams and honey and trecall and a little brandy and be sure and bring bras meall [brose-meal] it wood pay for any person to bring out some good chas and butter for the price was 3 shillings per pound and not good.'

Gold, birth and death (cont)

Their first child, James was born September 1855. In 1856 the family succumbed to the gold fever and travelled to north-west Victoria to the Woolshed diggings in the Ovens district behind Beechworth. Gold was first discovered here in 1852.

Reedy Creek and the Woolshed area became the richest fields in the North East. A minimum of 18,000 ounces of gold or half a tonne of gold left the goldfields on the fortnightly Victorian Government escorts. The Gold Rush in the Woolshed Valley was for surface alluvial gold which could be accessed at the surface of the river bed. Thus very few tools were necessary, and therefore anybody could dig for gold.

Prospectors and any family lived in tents. Living conditions were hard, with unsanitary conditions and cold and wet winters that increased risk of illness and disease. So this is the letter Alexander sent next:

“Living conditions were hard, with unsanitary conditions and cold and wet winters that increased risk of illness and disease.”

‘Feburary the 20 1857

Woolshaid Ovens

Dear Brothers & Sisters I am sorrow that I have to inform you of the death of our son James he died on the sixt of february only six days illness the first decsiess was water in the head the nixt was inflammation in the bran and that was the case of his dath as the lord hath been pleased to tak him to himself out of this wicked and sinfull world his dath was a sore travll to us but it was the will of our lord we must compose our minds and be pleased the lord goveth and he taketh away blessed be the name of our lord his body is intiered in the beachworth semetery it is a large piece of ground inclosed with a strong fense about ½ a mile out of the township of beachworth we have put a raill round his grave and a headstone with a inscription of the woards which follow

To the Memory of
James Mathieson
who died on the 6 of february 1857 Aged
17months
Son of Alex & Sarah Mathieson from Edin-
burgh

The lord Giveth
And the lord taketh
Away blessed be
The name of the lord

He just could walk very will and spick a little and he could play himself very will with his lit-
tle hamer we may say that he was just gattin
old fashaed and become very much attached
to us as he was a very contented and quite
child we may say that we niver lost a night rest
with him till he took the trubil of his dath as
we hope it is will with his little soul for to day
[die?] in ist youth.’

Gold, birth and death (cont)

'Went to Ovens diggings & mined there four years, leaving Melbourne for New Zealand by way of Sydney 18 September 1859 landed in Otago 6th October same year & joined my Brother John in dairying at Grant's Braes, the late Dr Burns property. Bought land in Tomahawk district in 1861 shortly after that going to Gabriel's Gully diggings and made a few hundreds. Returned and carried on dairying, bought more land & kept on increasing my property until I had 210 acres, built a new steading of blue stone in the most approved plan. The byre holds 70 cows.

Retiring from Business in 1892. Celebrated Golden Wedding 19th May

I have visited the little grave in Beechworth; the rail around it is still there, but not the gravestone. To the left is a brief summary of the rest of Alexander's life, dictated to his youngest daughter, my grandmother Wilhelmina (Mina).

Alexander and Sarah had 11 children, eight of whom were alive at their parents' Golden Wedding celebration. His farm on Centre Road, Otago Peninsula, is still in Mathieson family ownership. Alexander was an excellent farmer and prospered. C.S. Ross, author and minister of the Anderson's Bay church, praised Alexander highly in his book *Early Otago*: 'transparent honesty, truthfulness, and determination to conduct his business in a spirit of absolute fairness and probity'. ... 'He held his wealth as a trust, and knew experimentally the blessedness of giving, distributing it with discrimination and a wise Christian beneficence.'

Jeanette Brunton



The missing link: Can you help Rodger?

Rodger writes that he is still looking for that missing link that would confirm his Scottish heritage is just not in name and family upbringing. Several members of his family have searched records in New Zealand, England and Scotland but have not found any record of the family.

His grandfather Alexander Roderick Matheson is believed to have been born on the 1 January 1860 at Mortlake on Thames, London England. Married Ada Elizabeth (nee Chinnery) on the 26 May 1902 in Christchurch and died on the 18 July 1926 at Christchurch.

Rodger believes Alexander's parents Duncan and Sarah (nee Cameron) Matheson came to southern New Zealand from England about 1860 and spent some time at Morton Mains – Southland. Alexander appears on Electoral Rolls from 1881 to 1899 and from 1902 Rodger can trace his whereabouts.

Rodger's brothers Murray and the late Jon Matheson were foundation members of the New Brighton Highland pipe band and sister Jill highland danced. Jill and her husband are still very involved with the Scottish dancing throughout Marlborough.



The photo shows Murray and Jon in their Highland pipe band uniforms. Murray is Rodger's older brother, Jon was a year younger. He passed away a number of years ago, was a true Scottish man (with his money). Jon was a member of the Clan and escorted the late Chief to the West Coast of the South Island on his visit to NZ.

Rodger Matheson



Musings from the editor

Being part of the clan

What does it mean to be part of a clan, part of a society? I asked myself that question when thinking about if I wanted to be involved in this clan, and if I wanted to take up editing this newsletter. Particularly as back then I saw clans as an old fashioned institution with traditions that hang over from when men ruled everything. As a middle-aged woman who strongly believes in the equality of men and women I wasn't sure how I would fit in.

Thankfully I found lovely people with big hearts, fantastic stories, and a keen desire to ensure the society is something that all Kiwi Mathesons can feel at home in: young and old, any gender, any ethnicity.

I really love the sense of connection that comes with understanding my heritage, my whakapapa. Knowing about my Matheson family and history helps me to feel connected to other Mathesons and to the Matheson places. I also know that traditions

can change, and I like to think that I might be a small part in shaping what the Clan Matheson Society NZ could look like in the future. This is why I decided to be part of the NZ society, and to edit this newsletter.

The great thing about being part of the NZ branch of the clan, is our connections to the other branches. For those that have received this newsletter by email I have also attached the latest edition of the Australian clan newsletter, with their permission. It is lovely to read their stories of migration and connection to Scotland, which are so similar to ours.

At our AGM on 21 July, you are all very welcome to attend and be part of the discussions about shaping the future of the clan in NZ. I look forward to meeting you there!

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 connecting with your Matheson heritage. They can be a paragraph or a page, whatever you feel comfortable sharing.

Send your stories, news and photos to news@clanmatheson.org.nz

Many thanks to those who have shared their stories in the last few editions. I am so grateful for your wonderful words and photos.

Fac et Spera: Why is it our motto?

Hoping, not yet done...

In the last few newsletters I have tempted you with a future story about the likely history behind our clan motto, Fac et Spera (do and hope). My secret source tells me it is still a work in progress, and there is currently more hoping than doing happening! Of course once I finished chuckling over this lovely piece of Matheson humour, I assured them that we will happily wait.

In the meanwhile, I would still love to hear any other alternative ideas (fun or factual) on the history behind our clan motto, Fac et Spera.

Lara Penman

Clan Matheson international gathering 2020

Past Matheson gatherings

Mathesons from the world have got together at international clan gatherings, but it's only every few years that there is a formal Clan Matheson gathering.

From past newsletters it seems that previous gatherings have been:

2014	Scotland
2008	NZ and Australia
2004	Scotland
2001	Canada
1998	Scotland
1991	Canada
1988	Scotland
1987	Canada
1981	Scotland

Our records don't go back further and we may have missed some, so we'd love to get more information about international Clan Matheson gatherings. If you've been to one, let us know what it was like.

For more information about the 2020 gathering go to <http://www.clanmatheson.org> and <http://www.gmhg.org/> homepage

9-12 July 2020

Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, Linville, North Carolina, USA.

The 2020 programme is still being developed, but the basic outline is:

- Thursday 9 July 2020, evening. Hill climb called 'The Bear', and a torchlight opening ceremony at which all the participating clans are invited to declare themselves present at the gathering.
- Friday 10 – Sunday 12. Traditional events like foot races, Highland athletics, Highland dancing and piping competitions. There is a big emphasis is on allowing the clans that gather each year to conduct their own business as well as participating in the gathering.
- Saturday 11, probably in the afternoon and evening. Clan Matheson activities will include a Clan parliament and meal together.
- Sunday 12, approximately midday. Parade of tartans, after which the gathering closes.



It's not too early to start planning your leave, and saving so you can take part in this remarkable fusion of American and Scottish hospitality. If there is enough interest from New Zealand, we will look at coordinating accommodation so we're together at the gathering.

What else can you do around North Carolina?

Linville and Grandfather Mountain are in a really scenic area and are destinations in their own right. They are also well placed for exploring parts of the US that not many New Zealanders get to. It's only 3 or 4 hours drive to the Carolina coast, which has small resorts and larger towns like Charleston in South Carolina, and Wilmington in North Carolina. It's also a good region for digging into America's past, such as the Civil War, and is on the new [Civil Rights Trail](#), highlighting the campaign for racial equality that peaked in the 1950s and 1960s.

The area boasts plenty of Airbnb and VRBO (the US equivalent of Bookabach) accommodation, as well as standard accommodation such as motels.

And don't forget to go at least a few days early, so you can experience the Fourth of July weekend in the USA!

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

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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.