

# Connecting People with Matheson Heritage



## The Chair's Corner—our focus for the year

Greetings to all members of the Clan Matheson Society's New Zealand branch. I appreciate your interest in Matheson heritage, and support for the branch's work. I'm privileged to have been elected as chair at this year's annual meeting, and look forward to working with others on the committee, and members more generally, to foster interest in Matheson heritage and support for the branch. This is the first of my regular newsletter columns.

First I would like to thank my predecessor, Blair Matheson, for serving as chair. The past year has been one of transition, and we have appreciated Blair's hand on the tiller over that period. We also appreciate his ongoing support for Clan Matheson and this branch.

At the branch annual meeting in July we talked about setting achievable targets for the branch's activities for the next year, which we can build on as time goes by to further strengthen the branch. These have been further developed and adopted by the committee, which will work together — with members' support — to achieve them.

In no particular order, here are the eight priorities:

### Outreach and profile building

#### 1. Institute an award scheme

We've talked about this as a branch for several years, and now we're putting it into action. The aim is to foster interest in Matheson heritage, and links between those with Matheson connections in New Zealand and between those in New Zealand and worldwide. More generally, the award will foster knowledge, interest and skills related to New Zealand's Scottish heritage.

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## The Chair's Corner—our focus for the year (cont)

You can read about the first recipient of the award, Patsy Matheson, in this issue. In the next issue we will provide details of the award and its future operation.

### 2. Clan Matheson international gathering July 2020

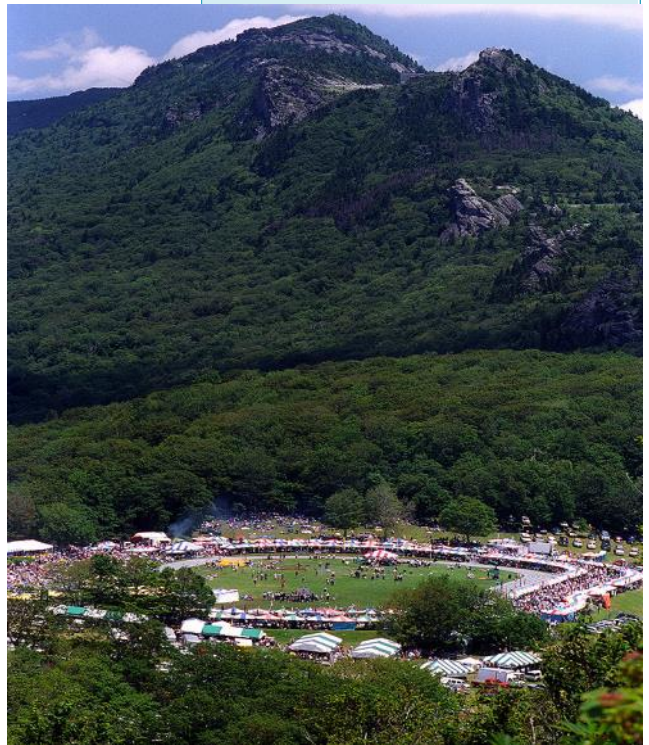
We will work hard to encourage New Zealand clan members and others interested in Matheson heritage to take part in the Clan Matheson international gathering in the USA in 2020. These gatherings take place only occasionally, and the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina will be a big drawcard. Details are on our website, and in the previous two newsletters.

### 3. Chief's visit

We will work with the Chief, Sir Alexander Matheson of Matheson, to arrange a future visit to New Zealand. Next year his focus will be on the gathering in the US, but we have already had discussions about a possible visit to New Zealand.

### 4. Website

This is the branch's public "shop window". We're looking at ways of continuing its use as an information resource, but also make it more dynamic. Check it out at [www.clanmatheson.org.nz](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz) and let us know what you think.



Join us at one of the highland games events around the country this summer.

## Membership activities and services

### 5. Local and regional gatherings

Committee member Rodger Matheson and his daughter Eden Matheson are active in promoting the clan at Highland games, and we will use these to encourage members to meet. Their next two events are the Hororata Highland Games on Saturday 9 November and Auckland Highland Games and Gathering on Saturday 23 November. See elsewhere in this issue for details of members' get-togethers at these events.

Other committee members will be considering opportunities to get members together in different parts of the country.

### 6. Newsletter

Our new-look newsletter is just one year old. We encourage all members to either contribute their stories, or put the editor touch with someone else who has something to share. Committee members are particularly encouraged to support the newsletter.

## The Chair's Corner—our focus for the year (cont)

### Organisational

#### 7. Membership

We'll investigate and implement ways of streamlining membership renewals and subscription payments.

#### 8. Structure

We will investigate whether it is worth establishing the branch as an incorporated society, and report to next year's annual meeting.

I do hope that all members will think about these priorities, and contribute in whatever way they can to help the branch foster Matheson heritage in New Zealand. If you do have any ideas or suggestions, please get in touch with me or any other committee member (details at the end of this newsletter).

Andrew Matheson

Chair, Clan Matheson Society NZ



I hope that members can contribute in whatever way they can to help the branch foster Matheson heritage in New Zealand.



John-Henry pipes in Mathesons to the 2019 AGM of the NZ Clan Matheson Society, and drew in some interested others too.

## Branch news: The 2019 Annual General Meeting

Clan members gathered in Auckland in late July to plan the branch's activities for the next year. We have a new committee and new chair.

The branch is very grateful to Blair Matheson for chairing the branch over the past year of transition. Blair has stood down for personal reasons, but remains Deputy Chief's Lieutenant. We are also grateful to those who stood down from the committee, but remain active supporters of the branch: Blair Matheson; Sandy Hayr; Keith Matheson and Shirley Matheson.

Andrew Matheson accepted the nomination as chair for the next year. In setting out ideas for the next year he proposed eight priorities for the branch, which have been considered by the committee and are outlined previously in this issue.

The treasurer, Doug Hayr, presented the accounts. The branch is good financial shape, and subscriptions have been held at the same level for another year. For only \$15, or \$20 for a family, you can support the branch and its activities. Paid-up members receive four copies of our new-look newsletter over the year.



*From the left, Andrew Matheson, Blair Matheson and Chris Binns*

*“We are grateful to those who remain active supporters of the branch.”*

Doug was re-elected as treasurer, and Chris Binns as secretary (who gave notice she will stand down after one more year in the role). Other committee members are Graeme Matheson (Christchurch), Joan Harbour (Auckland), Lara Penman (Wellington), Linda Matheson (Auckland), Rodger Matheson (Auckland) and Wayne Matheson (Queenstown). Committee members:

- support the chair in fostering and developing

the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society

- work together as a group to develop and implement ideas for the branch
- encourage people to join and support the branch
- organise local events to support members and encourage interest in the branch.



The committee appointed people to different tasks: newsletter editor Lara Penman, newsletter distributors Lara Penman and Doug Hayr, membership coordinator Chis Binns, piper John Henry Wilson, webmaster and family history advisor Andrew Matheson. How these people contribute to the running of the branch is described on our website.

## The first recipient of the Matheson NZ Award

At this year's AGM the branch agreed to set up an award to foster interest in Matheson heritage, and links between those with Matheson connections in New Zealand and between those in New Zealand and worldwide. More generally, the award will foster knowledge, interest and skills related to New Zealand's Scottish heritage. There will be more details about the award in future newsletters.

We are pleased to announce that the first recipient of the award is Patsy Matheson from New Plymouth. Patsy will use the award to attend Summer School run by the Royal New Zealand Pipe Bands' Association, during January 2020 in Wellington. For more information about the Summer School see [www.nzpipebands.org.nz/education/summer-school/](http://www.nzpipebands.org.nz/education/summer-school/).

Below is an introduction from Patsy. We will hear back from Patsy in a future newsletter when she tells us how Summer School went.

Congratulations Patsy—we hope you have fun.



*Patsy Matheson*

My name is Patsy Matheson and I have been piping for approximately 8 years. Although I often feel very green, especially when surrounded by such great pipers at band practices and competitions. I have always wanted to play the pipes and have always had a keen interest in Scottish history and culture. I used to carry around a tiny book about tartans as a small child. It wasn't until years later that I realised the Matheson tartan was in there with a description of some of our history as a clan.

In 2011 I went to live in Scotland for 2 years. A year in Edinburgh and a year in Glasgow. I loved the experience, working various jobs to fund my sporting and social life. While in Glasgow, I went to the World pipe band championships and thought that I should probably start learning. When I moved home that year my family got me a practice chanter for Christmas. I then found an excellent tutor in Ross MacDonald in New Plymouth. He and his wife Eunice have been so generous (and patient!) with their time and have

really helped grow my love for the instrument. Going to their house for my weekly lesson and general catch up is one of my favourite parts of the week.

I'm currently in the City of New Plymouth Caledonian Pipe Band. I'm really looking forward to going to summer camp for the chance to be around motivated pipers of different levels, abilities and backgrounds. I've competed in some solo piping competitions in the novice grade. My hope is that going to summer school gives me a boost heading into next years competitions. I am so grateful to Clan Matheson for funding this opportunity and I can't wait to let you know how it goes.

Many thanks

Patsy.

## 150 years of Mathesons in Paparimu: 1869-2019

The Matheson's of Paparimu are delighted to celebrate this momentous anniversary. For over the past 150 years, our family have had continuous ownership of this farmland, which we are proud to say is still farmed by the fifth generation today.

On the 24th April 1855 James Matheson and his sister Isabella fled the tough times in Scotland and embarked on a journey to New Zealand with great hope and an opportunity for a better life. They were farewelled by parents John and Lillias Matheson who were crofters on the Black Isle (near Avoch). They boarded the White Star, a clipper sailing ship which set sail from Liverpool, England, bound for Melbourne, Australia.

After reaching Australia, James stayed in Melbourne for three months and then crossed the Tasman to New Zealand. Isabella stayed in Melbourne and arrived in New Zealand years later with her husband John Smith and ran a boarding house in Clevedon.

James arrived in Auckland, but settled in Wairoa, now known as Clevedon. He purchased a piece of land from the McNicol property and commenced farming. In November 1858, after his mother's death, his father John and sisters Lillias and Annie came to live with James in New Zealand.

On 3rd October 1860, James married widow Jane Hatton (nee Matheson) the daughter of William and Elizabeth Matheson from Caithness, Scotland. They farmed dairy cows and began producing and selling butter into the Auckland market.

James and Jane, had five children. John, their second child, was born in 1862 and was the only sibling to reproduce and his family continuing the farms ownership. In 1865, they expanded their property and increased production and began adding cream and cheese to their business which became a further source of income.



During this time, land in Hunua was being surveyed. James and his brother-in-law James Sangster Wilson started investigating potential land upstream from the Wairoa River. In 1867, they ventured as far as the head waters of the Wairoa River, now Paparimu. When surveyed in 1869, James purchased Block 11 (360 acres). Paparimu is a Maori name meaning "Rimu Flat".

Since the native trees grew so dense and abundantly, the early settlers believed the land to be fertile. However, it took over twenty years of hard physical labour to clear the land making it suitable for farming.

Over the year more land was added to the family property. From what we can gather, they predominantly grazed sheep which they drove back to Clevedon to shear.



## 150 years of Mathesons in Paparimu (cont)

In 1893, John married Jessie Sutherland and they set up their home in Paparimu which was the first permanent residence on the block. John and Jessie had six children, three of which settled in Paparimu. Their two eldest sons, Jim and Hugh, fought in WWI during 1914 -1918. On their return from war, under very strict inheritance rules, 1000 acres was divided between Jim and Hugh. Bill, their youngest brother, purchased the Norrie Block. They all commenced farming on their own account. Jim had a Jersey stud. Hugh initially farmed dairy, and later changed to sheep and cattle. Bill farmed sheep and cattle for his entire farming career.

Keith and Shirley Matheson, the fourth generation on the farm, were married in 1964. The following year they purchased the farm off Hugh and began farming sheep. They raised their four children: Philip, Grant, Jeanette and Alan.

The mid 80's saw the demise of the wool industry and with new government policies this meant sheep farming was financially uneconomical. The property was converted to a beef fattening unit, supplying local supermarkets, which still continues today. The steep hill country was planted into exotic Radiata Pine.



Keith's son Grant and his wife Sonia purchased the farm in the early 2000's. Their sons Ryan and Cory have grown up on the farm and continue to love their rural lifestyle.



The original block is now the centre of Paparimu. The current school was built in 1937 and the community hall and tennis courts were built in 1954. The local garage was opened in 1952. All of these were built on the original Matheson Block.

Many groups and organisations have been welcomed to enjoy and share the property such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Boys Brigade, Mountain Safety and many school groups.

We are so proud that the sixth generation of Matheson's are passionate about farming and their heritage and we hope this legacy continues for a further 150 years!

Keith Matheson

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*“The original block is now the centre of Paparimu. The current school was built in 1937 and the community hall and tennis courts were built in 1954. The local garage was opened in 1952. All of these were built on the original Matheson Block.”*

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## Passing of Doug Matheson: 1925—2019

Stalwart of our New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society, Doug Matheson, died peacefully on 24 August surrounded by family members.



Doug had been involved in the branch since it was founded in 1989 by his cousin Roy Matheson and Ailsa Matheson. He served on the committee from about 1992 until standing down only last year, and was chair from 1995 to 1999. When the then chief, Sir Fergus Matheson, instigated the office of Chief's Lieutenant to represent him in other countries, Doug was the person he turned to in New Zealand. Doug served as Chief's Lieutenant in New Zealand from 1995 until stepping down early in 2018. He was made a life member that year for his commitment and service to the branch.

Though Doug had relinquished his official roles, he stayed very supportive of the clan. Just a month before his death he was at the branch's annual meeting in Auckland, keeping in touch with members, making suggestions and encouraging the group.

For Doug the clan was about family and friendships. He and his wife Anne travelled to Clan Matheson gatherings in Scotland, in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in Canada, and in Australia, sometimes with their adult children. Not only did he make friends easily, he was diligent about keeping in touch with them — as he said earlier this year about his international clan travels: "All wonderful times, wonderful people, and still keeping in touch with some".

His funeral at the Howick Presbyterian church, where he had been part of the congregation for decades, was a sad but heart-warming occasion. That approximately 300 people crammed into the church was testament to the regard in which he was held, and the lifetime commitment he had to a range of communities, particularly the church. At the centre of the event were different but complementary tributes from his four children, one of course being past chair and deputy Chief's Lieutenant Blair, and a video segment that featured many of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren saying what they appreciated about 'Poppa'. He was a great family man.

The Clan Matheson Society was well represented at the funeral, with members from different part of the country attending.

Andrew Matheson

A tribute to Doug appeared in the March 2019 issue of our newsletter.

## Passing of Mamatua Margaret Takaia Vaine Vahua-Matheson QSM

This is to advise the passing of Mrs Mamatua Margaret Takaia Vaine Vahua-Matheson QSM of Inave, Rarotonga on 27 June 2019. Mamatua was married to the late Kenneth Graham Matheson of Rotorua and returned to live in her homeland of the Cook Islands in late 2002. She is survived by six children, five sons and one daughter. Following are excerpts from the eulogy read at her funeral service in Rarotonga on 3 July by her third son and Clan Matheson Member, Dr Trevor Matheson, currently NZ High Commissioner to the Independent State of Samoa.



Mamatua was born In Arorangi on 28 October 1930, the seventh of nine children, six boys and three girls to Papa James Vahua Sekaria of Manihiki and Mama Temauiarii a Maruoi of Bora Bora.

In 1950 through an introduction arranged by her brother Haupini aka Jimmy Vahua she met her future husband Kenneth Graham Matheson in Rotorua. Mamatua and Ken married in September 1953 in Rotorua living first in Waikite Valley then Ngakuru.

Throughout her lifetime Mamatua accumulated numerous awards, honours, commendations and pins and badges of all types. In 1999 she received the Queen's Service Medal (QSM) for community service. But the one badge she truly valued was as a collector of hearts. Every person she touched she infused a bond of love, joy and respect.

If there's one word to describe Mamatua throughout her life, that word is "service". Mamatua lived and abided by the Cook Island proverb "Te maata i

taau ka oronga ko te maata rai ia i taau ka rauka." The more you give the more you receive. If you give a lot you will receive a lot. Do not be selfish. She willingly gave everything to the service of her god, family, community and country throughout her almost nine decades on this planet and left nothing on the benches. In return she was rewarded by an extraordinary and fulfilling life. At the same time Mamatua knew that her time on earth was limited as exemplified by the Maori proverb, "Whatu ngarongo te tangata, toitū te whenua": People will perish, but the land is permanent. So she made every minute of her remarkable life count knowing surely she will join her maker in heaven at life's end.

On behalf of my siblings and their children and grandchildren, we are so proud to have had Mamatua Margaret Takaia Vaine Vahua-Matheson as our remarkable, inspiring and loving mother.

Dr Trevor Matheson

## Crowdsourcing a new family history resource



- Alexander Matheson 1860 – 1926 (Alexander’s birth place is unknown).
- Ada Elizabeth Matheson (nee Chinnery)
- Charles Duncan Matheson 1906-1923 (Charles unfortunately drowned crossing a river on horseback. His parents were Duncan Matheson & Sarah Matheson (nee Cameron)).

This headstone situated in the Sydenham cemetery has been destroyed in the Christchurch earthquakes. These Mathesons are the Grandparents of Rodger Matheson and are the earliest ancestors Rodger knows of. It is his intention to restore the headstone.



“Some family actually laid out their plots like this?!”

### Photos of Matheson grave-stones in New Zealand

In our previous few newsletters 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.

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](#).

Please send any contributions to [web@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:web@clanmatheson.org.nz).

Enjoy this treasure hunt!

Andrew Matheson

## Committee member profiles: Getting to know your committee

*Each edition we will include a short profile of a few members of the Clan Matheson NZ society. Feel free to reach out to them with your thoughts about the clan, or if you want to connect.*

**Rodger Matheson** writes that he has been a Clan Member since its conception back in 1989.

For many years he ran a Scout Group in West Auckland and after retiring from Scouting joined the Clan Committee.

My family originates from Christchurch and Canterbury. I grew up with two bothers playing the pipes and a sister dancing. Having lived and travelled extensively throughout New Zealand both for work and holidays I still like travelling. Holidays are now spent travelling to Highland Games and representing our Clan at these games. My daughter Eden keeps me company. Our aim is to foster the growth of the Clan, meet members and non-members with the hope of someday someone will increase my knowledge of my Ancestors.

I would like to gather copies of books that relate to the Matheson's and copies of Family trees. These records are important for future generations to understand where their families originated from.



### **Andrew Matheson, chair**

For me family history is all about the stories. Who were our ancestors, how did they live and what can we find out about them as people? What motivated such extraordinary migration in the 19th century that brought them to New Zealand? I'm serving on the committee to work with others to strengthen



the branch, so it can better connect people with an interest in Matheson heritage in New Zealand and help them discover their own family stories.

My involvement goes back to 1989, when my father Roy Matheson encouraged me to become a member of the new branch that he was instrumental in forming. After limited involvement due to family commitments and living overseas I have become more active of late, serving on the committee for several years and taking up the position of chair for 2019–2020.

I've worked in New Zealand and internationally as an agricultural development consultant, policy adviser and diplomat. I now run my own business providing policy advice to government, and developing niche tours to interesting destinations. I live in Wellington with my partner Sue. My daughter also lives in Wellington, and my son and two grandsons live in the USA.

## Musings from the editor

### Connecting for our mental health

Tragic news in my extended family this week has got me thinking about just how important it is for each of us to put in time each day to support our mental health.

It is mental health awareness week on 23-29 September, and the mental health foundation website has some great tips and ideas (check it out at [www.mhaw.nz](http://www.mhaw.nz)). I was encouraged to see that one of the things that this society is all about—connection—is one of the “Five ways to wellbeing”

that they promote. Feeling connected to something is great for our wellbeing—so just by reading this newsletter, being part of this society, you are doing something positive for your wellbeing!

So I hope you can take steps to find balance, build resilience and boost your wellbeing. Who knows, by connecting with other Mathesons, giving your time and learning about your whakapapa you may just be helping others out too.

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](mailto: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.



Me doing something that really boosts my wellbeing—out in nature driving my jeep and having adventures!

## Clan Matheson Events

### Join us at a Highland Games event this summer

Clan Matheson members, and those interested in their Matheson heritage, will be getting together at two Highland games in November. Bring your lunch and meet Rodger at the Clan Matheson tent at noon.

**Hororata Highland Games**, Hororata Domain, Hororata, Canterbury. Saturday 9 November 2019. Check out the programme at <https://hororatahighlandgames.org.nz/> as there's a full day of activities to choose from.

**Auckland Highland Games**, Ellerslie Event Centre, 100 Ascot Avenue, Ellerslie, Auckland. Saturday 23 November 2019. There's a Facebook page for the event.

### **Waipu** 1st January 2020

Families are welcome to come and experience the Highland Games, march under the Matheson banner and share their Clan history and Family Tree.



Fun at the 2018 Hororata Games

**International Clan Matheson gathering, 9-12 July 2020**

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

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

### **Report: Kirkin' o' The Tartans, 30 June 2019**

The Church Service held on 30th June was well attended by the Clans including the Mathesons. A number of Banners were received by the minister Rev David Williams. His Explanation of the Kirkin' o' The Tartans was modern and from the Heart. The service included these words:

“We bring to God these Banners, symbols of Scottish Clans,  
And these Tartans from the forebears.

Woven from their hopes and their efforts,  
From their sorrows and their pride:

From their defeats and successes.

God has woven the fabric of our lives and

Let us say together

We bring these Banners and Tartans to the Kirk (church),

We offer to God, the blue of our seas, and the green of our land

The golden wealth of hills, and rivers, the blood of kinship

And loyalty and of open hearted hospitality.”

## 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](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz)

### International Clan website

[www.clanmatheson.org](http://www.clanmatheson.org)

### Membership

[membership@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:membership@clanmatheson.org.nz)

### Newsletter

[news@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:news@clanmatheson.org.nz)

## How to connect with us

[www.clanmatheson.org.nz/about/contacts](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz/about/contacts)

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### Clan Matheson New Zealand branch committee 2019–2020

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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/](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz/join-us/)

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