



Connecting People with Matheson Heritage

The Chair's Corner

Dear fellow Clan Matheson members

What a three months we've had! Our last newsletter in March came out as New Zealand was going into lockdown, and when what was happening overseas was still uncertain. Since then things have changed rapidly. New Zealand is now very well protected from the Covid-19 pandemic, though many other countries are not as fortunate.

Lockdown was an interesting experience, and one that we hope won't have to be repeated. Yet many people enjoyed it — commuting to work in slippers over a distance of 5 or 10 metres, bonding with neighbours they hardly knew, and seeing the credit card balance shrink.

But it has been tough, and life-changing, for many others. People have lost their jobs, some have lost loved ones. Others have seen businesses they've struggled for years to build up suddenly become worthless. So it's important to continue really looking out for others. Reach out to those in need. People continuing to spend will help rebuild the economy.

Covid-19 has also seen the Clan Matheson international gathering postponed to next year, which was rather inevitable given events in the USA. The good news is that Clan Matheson is still the 'honoured clan' at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina. Put the dates in your diary now: Thursday 8 to Saturday 11 July 2021.

We're also looking forward to our branch's annual meeting, which will be in Auckland on Sunday 2 August. To take advantage of the remote meeting skills many of us have learnt during the lockdown, people around the country can take part by Zoom. Details are in this issue.



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Please join in and share ideas about what you'd like to see the branch doing, and what you can offer to assist. At the meeting we ask for volunteers to form a small committee to share ideas and be active in supporting the branch. We also elect a chair, secretary and treasurer. The committee appoints people to other roles, including newsletter editor and membership coordinator. You can find out more about these roles on our website under [What makes the branch tick](#).

I hope to see many of you there, either physically at the meeting or taking part remotely.

Andrew Matheson
Chair, New Zealand branch
Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand



Perhaps a chance for some local travel... to our own Lake Matheson, South Westland, New Zealand

Life member stories: Roy Matheson

We conclude our series of articles on life members of the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society, with a brief portrait of the first person to receive this award.

Roy Matheson was recognised for his vision for establishing New Zealand link to the Clan Matheson Society, and his determined work in setting up the branch against formidable personal obstacles.

Roy and his wife Joan Matheson were working on forming a clan society from 1986: investigating models for establishing a society, corresponding with the chief Sir Torquhil Matheson, and tracking down all the Mathesons in New Zealand. Those were, of course, pre-internet days, so the task required visits to the local library to transcribe contact details from electoral rolls and telephone directories.



Roy in RNZAF uniform

“Roy was proud of his Scottish origins, but it was only later in life that he had the opportunity to explore them.”

Roy was an early adopter of computer technology, and by late 1988 he recorded: “At last all the 727 Mathesons on the electoral rolls are in the computer and the address labels designed. A few corrections from telephone directories are necessary and then I can print out copies, one for self and one for Gordon and Ailsa who I hope will be the leading lights in my hoped-for ways and means committee, and one for the chief”.

Gordon and Ailsa Matheson were old friends from when both couples had lived in Te Aroha, and their role in helping establish the branch has been told in earlier issues of this newsletter. In time both were also made life members.

Roy was convenor of the interim committee for the branch, and the inaugural clan gathering was held in Auckland on 25 June 1989. At this meeting the branch was formed and the gathering nominated Roy as the first chairman, but though

he joined the committee he turned the chair's position down as he was suffering from a terminal illness that was progressively reducing his ability to function.

As a branch newsletter in 1990 recorded, "Roy was already feeling the onset of illness, and nobly continued computer recording of membership as long as he was able. On relinquishing this task, life membership was granted as a small matter of recognition for Roy's work and vision". He died in January 1991, aged only 67.

Roy was proud of his Scottish origins, but it was only later in life that he had the opportunity to explore them. His paternal grandparents — Norman Matheson and Ann McDonald — migrated separately from Scotland to New Zealand, met here and married, and raised a family of 10 in rural towns and in Auckland.

Life member stories: Roy Matheson (cont)

But Roy was at a disadvantage in connecting with his Highland roots. His father (also called Norman) was Norman and Ann's seventh child, and the youngest of his generation to have a family. On top of that, all Roy's siblings were much older than him, and he was almost a generation out of sync as his eldest cousin was a full 30 years older than him. Roy never met his Scottish grandfather Norman, and was only five when Ann died.

Roy grew up in St Mary's Bay in Auckland, close to the Waitemata Harbour where he shared a love for yachting with his father and older brother. Roy was winning interclub yacht races from as young as 14 years old, and later in his teens and 20s he was successful in championship racing in different parts of New Zealand. His passion was also realised in work, through an apprenticeship to the well-known Auckland boat-builder Colin Wild. During WW2 he served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force both as a boat-builder and crew member on high-speed patrol launches.



Early yachting success

“...they talked for hours about Matheson heritage and setting up the New Zealand branch of the clan society.”

In 1951 he married Joan Palmer, and the demands of a growing family and a move away from the water put an end to his yachting days. He became involved in the Anglican church when living at Papakura, and despite the demands of a family of four boys studied — at first part-time and then full-time — for the ministry. As deacon and then priest, he served in parishes in Morrinsville, Te Aroha and Mangakino. Later the family settled in Hamilton where Roy took up full-time employment, including for a while as a boat-builder, and continued as a non-stipendiary (unpaid) priest in two Hamilton parishes.

Roy retained a strong interest in his family heritage, including his Matheson lineage. He had been close to his uncles and aunts, the older ones 'having the Gaelic' from growing up in Waipu with Scottish parents. One uncle in particular,

Hector Matheson, was a keen student of family history, and in the 1950s and 1960s shared his knowledge and his quest freely with the family, especially Roy.

Retirement in late 1983 allowed Roy a much more active involvement in both personal family history and fostering Matheson heritage. The first northern summer following retirement saw Roy and Joan head to meet Mathesons and Clan Matheson Society members in the USA, Canada and of course the UK. In July 1984 they were hosted by the then chief, Sir Torquhil Matheson, and his wife Serena, where they talked for hours about Matheson heritage and setting up the New Zealand branch of the clan society.

Roy Matheson (cont)

A further northern hemisphere trip in 1987, three months long, also had a strong clan focus, including the international Clan Matheson gathering in Nova Scotia, meeting relatives in the UK, and finding ancestral connections in the Outer Hebrides. "We crossed to Lewis", Roy recorded, "and found more warm hospitality everywhere. Great progress was made in the Matheson ancestor-searching in Callanish and Stornoway. There is something special about Scotland — even the weather was just as we imagined it to be, the blue mountains, the soft light, the mist, the long twilight and the heather".



Roy, Joan and their four sons: Ross, Ian, Andrew and Stephen. Mangakino 1966.

This interest and hard work was instrumental in the establishment of the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society in 1989, and in laying the foundations for continued personal bonds between New Zealand clan members and the chief — first Sir Torquhil Matheson, then his brother Sir Fergus, and now the current chief Sir Alexander (Sir Fergus's son).

Though Roy did not live long enough to see the branch and Clan Matheson links take root and flourish, he would have been satisfied to know that his interest in Matheson family connections was shared by many and had continued down the decades.

Andrew Matheson



Roy and a Scottish cousin at what are understood to be the ruins of the house of Angus Matheson, Roy's great-grandfather. Callanish, Scotland, 1987.

Our annual meeting for 2020

Join fellow clan members at this year's annual meeting of the New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society. It will be on Sunday 2 August from 1:30pm to 3:30pm at the Logan Campbell Room, Auckland Botanic Gardens, Manurewa, Auckland.

You can also join in by Zoom. To be sent an invitation for the Zoom meeting, please email secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz with 'Meeting invitation' in the subject line.

It would be great to see as many as possible join in, for several reasons. Firstly, it is always good to catch up

with fellow Mathesons and Matheson descendants. Secondly, to share ideas about how the branch can work to foster interest in Matheson heritage, and strengthen connections between Mathesons and Matheson descendants in New Zealand and worldwide.

There will also be elections for the branch committee, including the officers of chair, secretary and treasurer. More information about these elected positions, and other roles that support the branch, are on our website under [What makes the branch tick](#).

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

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

Clan Matheson Society NZ Annual Meeting: 2 August in Auckland

All welcome!



The Logan Campbell Room, Auckland Botanic Gardens

One road, one family, many stories

It's less than one kilometre long, and branches off the main road in the tiny Southland settlement of Waikaka. It carries the name of our clan, and honours just one pioneer family who lived there in the 19th and 20th centuries. But digging into the story of this Matheson Road is an insight into New Zealand's pioneering history, and the impact of war.

Allister Evans' Waikaka saga, a local history published in 1962, profiles the Scottish immigrants who founded this family — Angus Matheson from Skye and Margaret Burnett from Lochbroom in Rosshire.

Margaret had emigrated at the age of nine with her parents and three sisters, arriving at Bluff from Glasgow on the Helenslee on 25 September 1863. She later worked as a nursemaid on a Southland run, and it was here she met Angus.

Angus had emigrated on his own in the 1870s and worked on the Waikaka run as a shepherd. Evans recounts the story of Angus one day shepherding

on the run where Margaret (Maggie on the shipping register) was working. "He was using his binoculars the day she arrived and happened to train them on her. He said to his mate 'Who's that — she's the girl I'll marry'. And he did. She was a very good-looking girl, with beautiful brown hair, blue eyes and fair complexion".

They married in Wyndham, where Margaret's family lived, and rode on horseback to start their life together at Waikaka. There Angus set up the first butcher's shop, and later went back to shepherding before buying a farm.

Evans also recounts the couple's social life: "Mr and Mrs Matheson often rode to Waikaia from Waikaka [more than 30 km] to go to dances. They took their two children with them on their horses. The children were put to bed in the dressing room while the parents danced all night. At daylight they would ride back to Waikaka, bringing their children with them, and carry on with their daily work without any sleep".



One road, one family, many stories (cont)

In time Angus and Margaret had six sons.

Walter Murdoch Matheson (c. 1873–1940) farmed at Waikaka. In 1900 he married Annie Jane McKay (1880–1944). Both are buried at Waikaka, with "wee Nan Turnbull (stillborn)". They had three children (and possibly others, as online records go up only to 1920):

- Margaret McDougall Matheson (1900–1976). In 1924 she married Leslie Charles Turnbull, a labourer of Gore, and they had two daughters.
- (Annie) Doreen Matheson (1916–1994). Married first John Hancock Scott (divorced) then Owen Davies Clarke.
- Walter Hugh Alexander Matheson (c. 1918–1994). Served in WW2, and in 1944 he married Joy Thelma Horrell. Walter is buried Invercargill's eastern cemetery and commemorated on the Waikaka war memorial.

Neil Alexander Matheson was born in 1875 and died aged only 20 days.

George Burnett Matheson (1876–1943) worked as an engine driver and as a farmer, and didn't marry. He is buried in Waikaka cemetery with his parents.

Angus Neil Matheson (1878–1958), known as Neil perhaps in memory of his dead elder brother. The story of his WWI service is told on our [website](#). Before the First World War he was a dredgemaster, and later lived in Ohai and Invercargill and worked as an engineer. He also doesn't seem to have married. He is buried in Waikaka cemetery and commemorated on the Waikaka war memorial.

Archibald McArthur Matheson (1882–1926) married Catherine Elizabeth Cockroft in 1912 and they had at least seven children:

- Angus Adin Matheson (1913–1973). Married Catherine Rubina Thomas (divorced).
- Annie Margaret Bessie Matheson (1914–1993). Married Andrew Crawford.



- John Archibald George Matheson (c. 1915–1945), who like his father was known as Archie. As Private 17415 in the New Zealand Army, he died on 9 February 1945 while a prisoner of war in Germany. His story is told on our [website](#).
- Emily Ellen Jean Matheson (c. 1917–1924).
- Muriel Heather Matheson (1919–2004). Married Frank (Francis Edward Charles) Maxted.
- Linda Isobel Matheson (born about 1920).
- Lesley Ferne Matheson (born about 1924). Married (Colin) Lester Diack, and they had children Amanda and Andrée.

One road, one family, many stories (cont)

Archie Senior died in his early 40s, when he was working as a trainer (presumably of horses). The youngest of his six children was then less than two and his eldest only 13, so the family must have gone through some hard times.

Archibald snr, Catherine, Emily and Muriel are buried in Invercargill eastern cemetery, and Archie jnr is commemorated there.

Hugh Alexander Matheson (c. 1886–1944) also served in WWI, and was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry in the field. His WWI service is profiled on our website. Hugh married Margaret Fowler (c. 1890–1950) in 1922, and it's not known whether they had any children. They

lived at Nightcaps in Southland, and are buried in the Wairio cemetery. Hugh is commemorated on the Waikaka war memorial.

The pioneer parents of these six children are both buried in Waikaka cemetery. Angus was born in Scotland in about 1843 and died in 1907. Margaret was born in 1854 and died in 1928. We haven't yet found a photo of Angus, but Margaret is almost certainly the elderly "Mrs Matheson" who appears in a portrait of members of the Waikaka branch of the Lady Liverpool League — a patriotic organisation that provided support for soldiers in the First World War (middle row, third from left).



The section on our website documenting places in New Zealand named after Mathesons is continuing to grow, as members contribute material. As with any family history, it's the stories behind the facts and figures that carry interest and preserve the memories of our forebears.

We'd love to hear more about the people behind the Matheson place names in New Zealand. If anyone reading is related to the Mathesons of Waikaka, we are keen to hear more of the family's stories. A longer version of this article is on our [website](#).

Andrew Matheson and Zeld
Matheson.

Ways of telling stories

If you had extra time during lockdown you might have done more to plug away at your family history stories. Quite a few institutions worldwide have opened up free access to their collections, which was a big help. We've publicised some of these in the Clan Matheson New Zealand [Facebook group](#).

And even though lockdown is over, it's never too late to start or restart! There are far more ways of recording and sharing your stories than the traditional printed book or booklet. Running a website is a fun and flexible way to do this, and made simple with platforms such as [Wordpress](#).

Here's just one example: [Journeys, a family history blog](#). It has information and stories with Matheson, Omaha, Waipu and Nova Scotia connections.

Clan Matheson News

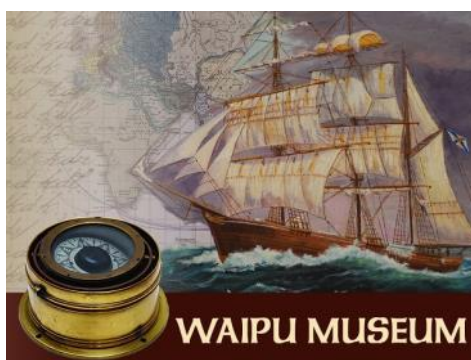
Planning ahead

The **Clan Matheson gathering will be hosted by the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games** in North Carolina, USA, from Thursday 8 to Sunday 11 July 2021. Check it out at [Grandfather Mountain Highland Games](#).

A clan gathering is an excellent opportunity for members of Clan Matheson from around the world to make new friends and renew old acquaintances, and enjoy Scottish culture fused with local hospitality. Updates will be in future issues of this newsletter and on our website [events page](#).

The next Waipu Highland Games, on 1 January 2021, will be the 150th, and no doubt the anniversary will be marked in a special way.

Before that, on 17 and 18 July this year is the 10th anniversary of Waipu's Art N Tartan event. Think World of Wearable Arts meets Scottish tradition, re-interpreted for the 21st century. Check it out on [Facebook](#). No news yet about any plans to postpone or cancel this event; hopefully things are more normal by then.



www.unescomow.org.nz

Waipu Museum
Scottish Migration Collection

*Inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World
Aotearoa/New Zealand Register (2016)*

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

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/

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