

Clan Matheson New Zealand

Chair's corner

Greetings to all with an interest in Matheson heritage.

I trust you enjoyed the September newsletter. Please feel free to send the newsletter [link](#) to other members of your family so that they are involved in Clan Matheson. The newsletter is now available free of charge.

The September 2021 issue was the first produced by the new editor, Andrew Matheson, who is building on the excellent work done by his predecessor, Lara Penman. Lara edited the newsletter for three years, and introduced a bold new design and sourced a wide range of interesting content. We are really grateful for her innovation and hard work over that time.

All of the new-format newsletters edited by Lara are available on our [website](#).

We New Zealand Mathesons are still able to connect virtually through our website (and enjoy its ongoing development), and via Facebook and the newsletter — now available on line.

To meet face to face in our traditional Scottish ways, organisers of future games and gatherings will have in mind how we can best protect each other from the Covid virus. We will, no doubt, make the best of any opportunities, perhaps travelling with the help of our vaccination pass.

It is disappointing that it is not possible to hold the 2022 Waipu Highland Games, since these are one of the most anticipated Scottish gatherings of the year. The games have been postponed until 1 January 2023.

You can see committee member Rodger Matheson in the Clan Matheson tent at these and other Highland games. He helps make connections and strengthen relationships between our clan and other clans in New Zealand.

Rodger shows those with Matheson heritage the opportunities from being involved in Clan Matheson. He is likely to mention virtual connections, the newsletter, information about family history and the Clan Matheson grant. You are welcome to call in to the tent and introduce yourself to Rodger.

Newsletter of the
New Zealand branch of the
Clan Matheson Society

December 2021

Issue 165

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Connecting people with Matheson heritage



The branch committee has confirmed the next steps to establish the New Zealand branch of Clan Matheson as a legal entity:

- A trust will be established as a charitable trust board.
- The committee will seek to have this trust registered as a charity.

This detailed development is being carried out by Andrew Matheson. The committee is fortunate to have his expertise and commitment to guide the work.

We were pleased to receive an application for a grant from Clan Matheson. Unfortunately, the activity that the grant related to was cancelled. So, again, please keep this grant in mind if you or your family are keen to foster interest in our Matheson family heritage.

We New Zealand Mathesons are still able to connect virtually ... and make the best of any opportunities to gather in traditional ways

Thank you to those who have made a donation to Clan Matheson New Zealand branch. The grant is one of the activities supported by donations.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in Clan Matheson this year, and helped the clan to have a place in New Zealand.

After all the uncertainty we've had in 2021, this Christmas will be very special if you are able to gather with family and friends. For Hogmanay, I will be pleased to say goodbye to the last day of 2021 and to welcome in new beginnings in the New Year.

I wish you all the best for the holiday season and for 2022.

Lena Orum
Chair, Clan Matheson New Zealand branch
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Family history Q&A

Have you hit a brick wall in finding out more about your family heritage? Have you learnt some new research tricks that others might benefit from?

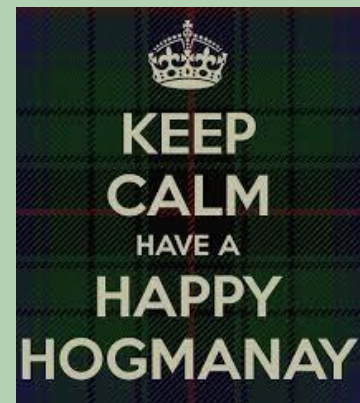
Our website now has a [family history forum](#) where you can post your questions and comments. You might also want to post your queries (and tips) on the Clan Matheson New Zealand [Facebook group](#).



Clan Matheson New Zealand

www.clanmatheson.org.nz

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



Shipboard stories

by Andrew Matheson

A pivotal point in many of our family stories is a long sea voyage half way around the world to New Zealand. For most of our early ancestors it was to be a one-way journey, and they left knowing they would never see their parents, siblings or friends again.

What were their farewells like? What did they encounter on the journey? What were their emotions on reaching their destination? The most direct answers to all of these questions lie in diaries kept on the voyage, if you happen to be fortunate enough to have access to one from your relatives.

Graeme Matheson of Christchurch holds a diary kept by his grandmother Mary Todd Russell. Just two months after she married Kenneth Matheson in 1885, the couple travelled from Scotland to Plymouth in England to board the steamer *Bombay* for Australia. They later moved to New Zealand.

Mary's diary starts with a matter-of-fact "Left Kincardine half past 3", with no mention of any family farewells. Her account is a fascinating description of shipboard life: bad weather, rough seas, the novel heat of the tropics, sickness and death, how the Sabbath was (or was not) observed, domestic chores and disagreements among the passengers and the crew.

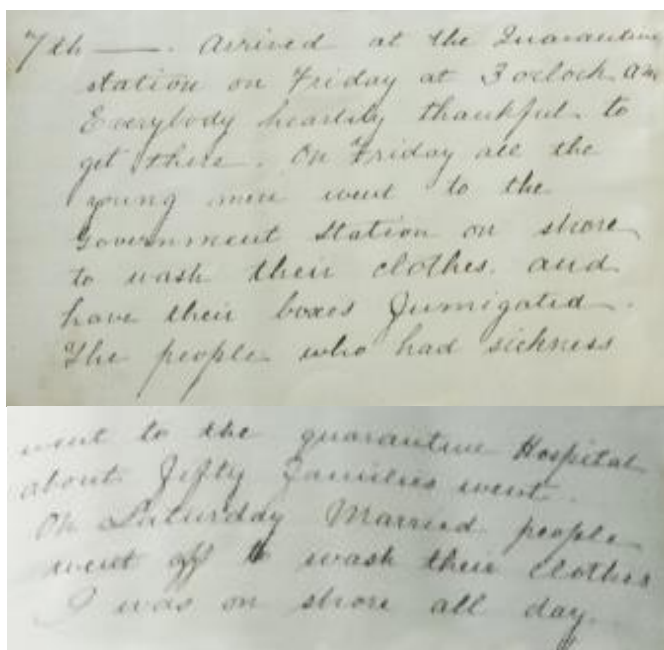
It was a tough voyage, as the diary records.

24 April. The heat today is oppressive. We take all our meals on deck — now have awnings up which keep us much cooler. School was dismissed this morning on account of the heat. The Doctor told us at the Plymouth Depot that a good number of the children would die on the voyage.

20 May. Have not written for a week as Kenneth has been poorly with a heavy cold, also toothache and swollen face — he was in bed for 3 days. The doctor pulled the tooth for him. He was very weak as the dispensary keeper gave him an overdose of castor oil. The ship has rolled dreadfully — I thought we would be tossed to pieces and one can scarcely walk on deck without being wet with spray.

The voyage doesn't seem to have been a very sociable one for Mary, either. Not long before arriving in Sydney she reflected:

27 May. This boat has been a regular slowcoach and very uncomfortable. I do not like any of the passengers well enough to have any intimacy with them with the exception of the Goods.



Mary's early experiences in Sydney

7th Arrived at the quarantine station on Friday at 3 o'clock am. Everyone heartily thankful to get there. On Friday all the young men went to the Government Station on shore to wash their clothes and have their boxes fumigated.

The people who had sickness went to the quarantine Hospital about fifty families went. On Saturday married people went off to wash their clothes. I was on shore all day.

... shipboard stories ...

You can supplement personal records such as a diary with official records, given you know the ship's name and voyage date.

Newspapers are an invaluable source: in New Zealand PapersPast, and in Australia through Trove. Passenger lists may be available online, though in general the earlier the voyage, the harder to find and less informative these are.

But what if you don't even know what ship your relatives travelled on?
Finding that out is a much harder, but not impossible, task.
More on that in a future issue.

The Steamer Bombay.

EPIDEMIC OF MEASLES.

140 IMMIGRANTS SICK.

SEVEN DEATHS.

The death record of the Orient Company's chartered immigrant steamer Bombay, which arrived in port on Friday, is a painful one. Sickness has prevailed to a greater or less extent during the whole passage, which occupied only fifty-one days. On the eight day out the first case of measles appeared, and the disease spread with alarming rapidity until the doctor had no less than 140 cases under his care. Several cases of scarlatina also occurred. Seven deaths were recorded on the passage, all of young children. Three died from measles, three from exhaustion and one from scarlatina. The papers show that on leaving Plymouth there were on board 160 single men, 112 single women, 73 married men, 100 married women, 79 boys, 79 girls, and 23 infants: total 626. Two births took place on the voyage. Dr. Beattie, assisted by Dr. Crusse, had the health of the immigrants in hand, while Mrs. Eagen and Miss Pinkerton filled the positions of matron and sub-matron respectively. On her arrival the Bombay was boarded by Dr. Sibley, who ordered her into quarantine, from where she will probably not be released till Tuesday. Everything was found to be neat and clean on board.

Evening News, Sydney, 8 June 1885

LIST of IMMIGRANTS per Ship <i>S.S. Bombay</i>										Arrived on the <i>5</i> day of <i>June</i> 188 <i>5</i>									
NAME	MARRIED		AGES										Calling	Native Place and Country	Religion	Read or Write	Remarks		
	M.	W.	13 Years and upwards		7 and under 12 Years		4 and under 7 Years		1 and under 4 Years		Under 1 Year								
			M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.							
<i>Matheson</i>	<i>Kenneth</i>	<i>M.</i>												<i>Garden Lagoon</i>	<i>New South Wales</i>	<i>Presby</i>	<i>✓</i>	<i>✓</i>	
	<i>Mary</i>	<i>W.</i>	<i>18</i>												<i>Perth</i>	<i>Presby</i>	<i>✓</i>	<i>✓</i>	

From the official record of Mary and Kenneth Matheson's arrival in Sydney

An original diary is a treasure for you and future generations.

As custodian, consider getting a high-quality digital copy made for archiving and for sharing with others.

Store the original in a suitable place. Think about donating it to an appropriate museum or archive, so it can be looked after professionally and available to all.



North Head quarantine station, Sydney

... shipboard stories ...

Twenty-four years before Mary and Kenneth Matheson travelled on the *Bombay*, my great-great-aunt Margaret Matheson left Scotland for London, where she boarded the sailing ship *Velore*. She was bound for Otago to join her fiancé, who had left earlier to find a job and a place to live. This was quite a common pattern of emigration.

Margaret's diary starts in Scotland almost a month before her ship departed. At the time she was staying at Rogart with her mother's brother, the Rev Alexander McLeod. She noted:

Sunday 17th February 1861 I went to Golspie to hear the sermon. Heard my dear Uncle preach from the words, 'Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world'. Felt very much affected, being the last time I was to hear my Uncle.



Margaret Matheson

After leaving London there was a day ashore at Plymouth, but after that no more stops in the voyage of five months.

As a very devout Christian Margaret was horrified by the way the Sabbath was not observed: "No respect for the Lord's Day ... Never passed such a Sabbath as this before in my life".

Drunkenness was also a shock: "The new steward drunk last night and again this morning. Our cook and some steerage passengers drunk. It is fearful to see them. I felt dull".



Velore, which brought Margaret Matheson to New Zealand

"Felt very much affected, being the last time I was to hear my Uncle"

Margaret's diary records her journey by coach, train and steamer to London, where she sampled big city life and prepared for her voyage to New Zealand.

Saturday 2nd March. Felt very dull after parting with the last of my dear friends, my darling brother. Passed the day reading and writing. Deafed with the noise from the streets.

Like Mary Matheson's diary, Margaret's is a detailed account of life on board the ship that was taking her to a new life.

The *Velore* crossed the southern Indian Ocean in winter, which at times made for an exceedingly uncomfortable journey.

Thursday 11th July. Blew a tremendous gale all last night and blowing hard all day. Blessed be God who is sparing us from day to day. Moderated a little in the evening, ship rolling a good deal. I did not sleep much for the last two nights. Did not undress last night.

... shipboard stories ...

After nearly five months at sea the end of the voyage was tantalisingly near:

Friday 26th July. The first part of New Zealand in sight this morning, which is Stewart Island. Passed through a great many rocks last night. The Captain and some of the passengers did not go to bed at all. I did not undress but slept little. The moon up at 1/2 past 9 — a beautiful sight, cannot describe it.

Because of unfavourable winds it was almost another two weeks until the ship berthed at Port Chalmers.

August 8—Dunedin, Stewart, from Newcastle, N.S.W., with coals.

Same day—Veloce, 484 tons, Hayes, from London, with general cargo. Passengers—Cabin; Mr. and Mrs. Mackean and family (2), Mrs. and Miss Nodding, Miss Mathieson, Messrs. Hudson, Chas. Smith, Robt. Smith, W. H. Whalley, John Ross, and R. Duncan. 2nd Cabin: Mr. and Mrs. Kilgour and family (6), Jas. Scrimigeour, and MacLachlan. John Jones and Co., agents.

Otago Witness, 10 August 1861

Tuesday 6th August. This is a fine day and the wind favourable. Got a Pilot on board at 2 p.m. and got safe to Port Chalmers at 5 p.m. ... the passengers went ashore. Did not take a drop of water today till a boat went ashore and brought some water at seven. And had a good drink.

Wednesday 7th August. Mr. Johnstone, the First Church Minister, came aboard by the steamer this morning and brought me to the Manse, where I am to be for a week. Mrs. J. a very nice person. My dear K. came in the evening and remained in the Manse all night.

THE Clipper "VELORE."—The long-looked for "Veloce," sent out here by Shaw, Savill, and Co., dropped anchor in this port on Tuesday last, having cleared from London on the 7th March, thus making a long passage of 152 days, of which the passengers inform us they were heartily sick, and no wonder. The "Veloce" has brought upwards of 20 passengers, and a large general cargo, which should have been landed months ago. Shaw, Savill, and Co. certainly deserve praise for the fast-sailing class of vessels they send to this port with goods, and we trust merchants at home will note it. We can obtain no particulars of the voyage.

At the Manse, Port Chalmers, on the 15th inst. by the Rev. William Johnstone. Mr. KENNETH MORRISON, teacher, Upper Harbour, to MARGARET M'LEOD, daughter of Mr. Angus Mathieson, Carloway, Ross-shire, Scotland.

Otago Witness, 31 August 1861

If you don't strike the jackpot finding a relative's diary, it's worth searching for the next-best thing.

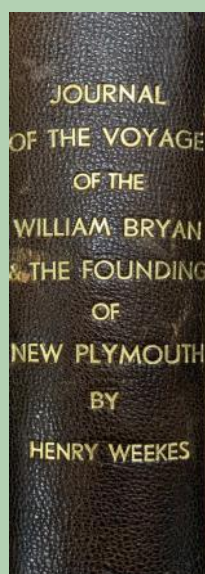
Did someone else keep an account of the same voyage? That would give you one perspective on the conditions your relatives encountered.

For example, some of my English relatives, Edmund and Lucy Sartén, left Plymouth in England on the *William Bryan* in November 1840.

This was the first immigrant ship to the infant New Zealand Company settlement that was called New Plymouth, and it arrived there at the end of March 1841. The Sartens didn't keep a diary, to the best of my knowledge, but the ship's doctor (surgeon), Henry Weekes, did.

The original diary is in Taranaki Museum, but a nicely bound transcript is in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. It was published in 1940, perhaps as a centennial project.

... shipboard stories



As with other diarists, Weekes describes life on board in some detail: the novelties such as the tropics and seeing flying fish, the difficult conditions encountered en route, and the dangers faced — particularly fire from the kitchen and the lamps and candles on board.

It was a tough trip: "The Wm Bryan is a terrible roller. Much sickness among the children". Eventually they arrived: "Landed all the Emigrants, having beautiful weather for the purpose".

When searching for related diaries, be careful to look for the same voyage as your relatives were on, as many ships made repeated return journeys to New Zealand. You might also find out more about the journey from accounts in newspapers.

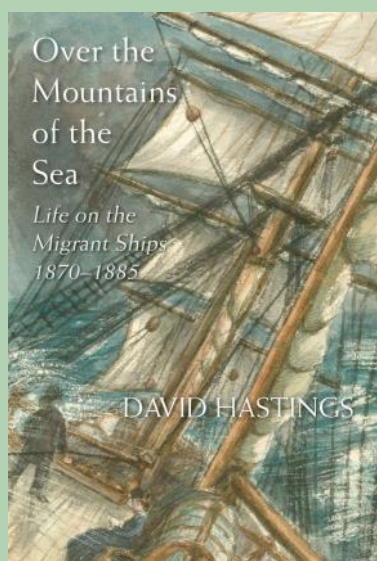
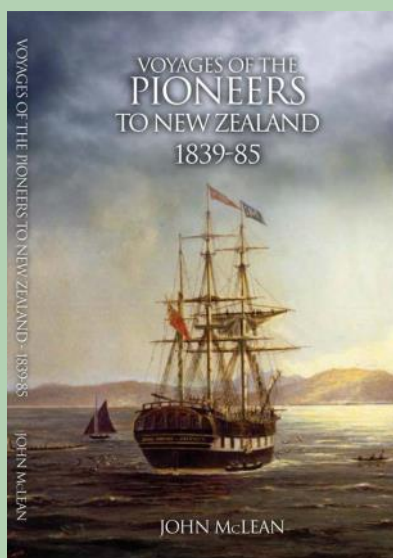
Even in the absence of a diary, you can still get a very vivid picture of shipboard conditions experienced by the early Scottish immigrants to New Zealand.

John McLean is a New Zealand historian with a deep knowledge of Scottish migration. For instance, his book *Sailors and settlers* is a very thorough account of the migration of Highlanders to Waipu.

In *Voyages of the pioneers to New Zealand 1839—85* he gives a detailed insight into the long voyage down the Atlantic, around the Cape of Good Hope and through the rough southern ocean to New Zealand. He draws on a variety of sources, including shipboard diaries.

Another good reference is by David Hastings. In *Over the mountains of the sea: life on the migrant ships 1870 — 1885*, he draws heavily on shipboard diaries and archival accounts to develop a narrative of the voyage and the way in which the space on the ship was allotted according to gender, class and marital status — describing how the ships were a microcosm of the society that British migrants were from.

The long journey to New Zealand was a momentous part of the lives of early immigrants to New Zealand. Finding out more about it is a significant part of researching our family stories.



Kiwi Mathesons

by Lena Orum

For parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles

Knowing where we come from

Knowing where in Scotland your Matheson ancestors came from is another part of our origin story. The place, towns and landscapes add more life to our family tree stories.

Mathesons come from across Scotland, as shown in Rodger’s article ‘An ancestral search’, with its map of Matheson farmer clusters, that was in the September 2021 newsletter. Kiwi Matheson origins are likely to include several of the sites shown on the map. In our families we may know where our Mathesons came from in Scotland.

For ideas and resources to support your investigations the Clan Matheson website has a [Family history forum](#) and a [Facebook group](#) where members may have answers to your questions.

Can we find the location, the local mountain and river that would have been important to our Matheson ancestors?

A special Kiwi introduction — pepeha

When learning about New Zealand history, visiting marae or participating in Māori gatherings, our children (or we too) may be asked to introduce ourselves.

In New Zealand, Māori have a set way of introducing themselves (pepeha), that tells people who they are by making connections to their ancestors (through whakapapa) and to people and places that are important to them.

We all have a pepeha, and in Clan Matheson this links to our Matheson ancestors. We are very likely to have other clans or nationalities in our ancestry too.

A pepeha is like a story that connects us to our past and can support our children to be positive in their own identity — so they know and can tell others about who they are and where they came from.

For young people and children

Talk to your parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Find out about where your Matheson ancestors lived in Scotland. If you can find the place on a map you could find an important mountain and river.

You may know the name of the ship that your Matheson ancestors arrived on when they came to New Zealand.

Now you are ready to introduce yourself in a way that is special to New Zealand, a pepeha. This set way of letting people know who you are is one that Māori people often use.

Use the sentences below to write your pepeha showing your Matheson family.

Greetings everyone
_____ is my mountain
_____ is my river
Scotland is the county my ancestors came from
_____ is the ship my ancestors arrived on
_____ is my family name
_____ is my mother
_____ is my father
_____ is my name

You can google pepeha to find more ideas. Here are two sites that have a Māori translation that you may like to use:

[How to structure your pepeha](#)

[Pepeha interactive tool](#)

Family history research

by Andrew Matheson

Genealogy databases

We're much luckier than even our parents, for who family history research meant trips to libraries and writing to distant archives and researchers for help. Now much of what we need is at our fingertips.

There's a lot of priceless information about your ancestors and other relatives, just waiting to be found at the click of a mouse. But how to locate it? As fantastic as Google is, you are going to need some specialist help. This is where family history websites or databases come in.

We're talking here about databases for family history research, not about programs you can use to store the information that you discover. Those will be the subject of a future article.

Genealogy databases are mostly subscription sites, so either you have to pay to use them (annual, monthly or pay per view) or trot down to your local library. Many libraries have on-site access to one or more databases. You might subscribe to one for use at home, which is very handy, but do remember to check out other sites as they each have different collections available.

The leading sites allow you to:

- search their collection of on-line records
- build a family tree and publish it on their website (privacy settings can be varied)
- take part in forums or discussion groups, which is handy for seeking help and finding people with similar interests
- get a DNA test and find relatives through matching.

There are several main subscription sites.

- [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Probably the leader in the field. Worldwide coverage. Many-members' family trees.
- [Findmypast](https://www.findmypast.com). Very strong for UK research. A pro subscription gives access to the British newspaper archive (which is not free to use, unlike PapersPast in New Zealand). Not many family trees on the site.
- [TheGenealogist](https://www.thegenealogist.com). Another UK site, but with a less comprehensive collection than its competitors. Less of Scottish interest.
- [MyHeritage](https://www.myheritage.com). Formerly concentrated on the US market, and has only recently started building up its UK collection.

With Christmas not far away, it might be time to start casting hints about getting a subscription as a present. It's worth trying the sites out first by using a free trial period or by visiting your library, as each has different coverage and different strengths and weaknesses.

Feel free to share your experiences of different sites in our [family history forum](#) or [Facebook group](#).

You don't have to pay a subscription to find out everything. In the next issue we'll look at the many valuable free sites for people researching their family origins.



Waipu Museum

The museum at Waipu has changed its name to the Waipu Scottish Migration Museum, to better reflect and communicate its origins and focus.

This unique local museum was built in 1953 as a memorial to the original migrants, who travelled from Scotland to Nova Scotia and later on to New Zealand (for some, via Australia). It was also established to house artefacts and records of the genealogy relating to this migration of almost 1,000 Gaelic-speaking Scots in the 1850s.

The museum was built in the style of a highland croft and entirely funded by descendants of the Nova Scotian migration. They celebrated their history at a centennial celebration in 1953, when the museum was first opened and given the name The House of Memories.



Thanks to strong support from a community that still proudly celebrates its special origins, the museum has grown into a modern story-telling centre. In 2016 its collection was included in the UNESCO Memory of the World register for New Zealand.



Now that we can travel freely again, if you're heading north of Auckland be sure to make time to visit this unique museum. Check out its [website](#), and for a modest sum subscribe to its quarterly [newsletter](#).

There were quite a few Mathesons among the Waipu migrants. If you have Waipu ancestry you're in luck, because the museum is host to a database with more than 112,000 entries. The friendly genealogy team are only too happy to help you find out more and link up with relatives.

There's more on the Waipu migration story on our website [here](#).



News and events



Covid-related restrictions continue to cause uncertainty and disruption for event organisers. Even if restrictions might be lifted by the time events are scheduled to take place, the teams of volunteers who organise them need certainty to be able to invest time and money into preparations.

Event postponed

The 2021 Art'n Tartan show at Waipu, its 10th anniversary event, was twice postponed this year and has been put off again, this time to 15 and 16 July 2022. This amazing event brings Scottish heritage into the 21st century (think World of Wearable Art). Check out its [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [website](#).

Events cancelled

The [Waipu Highland Games](#) won't be held on 1 January 2022. You will have to wait until 1 January 2023 for the delayed 150th celebration of the first Highland games (then called Caledonian games) in 1871.

For the same reasons, the [Turakina Highland Games](#) and the [Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo](#) will next be held in 2023.



Christmas is a coming

With Christmas approaching fast, it might be time to check out our website page for [Matheson merchandise](#). Kilts, badges, flags and accessories — whether for inspiration or dropping hints to others, there are plenty of New Zealand retailers to choose from.



How to connect with us

Clan Matheson Society New Zealand Branch

Our objectives are to:

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



New Zealand branch website

www.clanmatheson.org.nz

International clan website

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Clan Matheson New Zealand committee 2021 – 2022

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

Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand

Andrew Matheson

Chief's Deputy Lieutenants for New Zealand

Blair Matheson

Graeme Matheson

Support our work

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

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

Bank account:

Clan Matheson Society New Zealand branch

03 1559 0103339 00

Sign up on our [website](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz) to receive our quarterly newsletter.