

Clan Matheson New Zealand

Chair's corner

Beannachdan dhuibh

(which you might pronounce 'byan-akhk-than ychgoo-eev').

That's 'Greetings to you' in Gaelic, the language of some of our Scottish ancestors. In this issue we have the first in a series of articles about this language, exploring its origins and how Gaelic came to spread across the world including to New Zealand.

I have been intrigued to find out about learning Gaelic in New Zealand. I've heard stories from some decades ago when a Cameron friend described how learning songs in Gaelic was great fun, more so than learning grammar! And now in the 21st century, a young Matheson descendant at the Hororata Highland Games mentioned that she was learning Gaelic using the app Duolingo. This app is free, and users can practise vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. I was delighted to hear how her Scottish heritage was being valued.

While travelling on the Isle of Lewis I saw pictures of the children in a Gaelic-medium school, Sgoil nan Loch (Lochs School). Coincidentally, my great-great-grandfather Angus Matheson taught Gaelic in Lochs parish in the early 1830s.

I see on the Lochs School website that half of the pupils are learning in Gaelic-medium classes. As a Kiwi, it did remind me of how in New Zealand we too support indigenous language through Māori-medium classes and kura.



It was a beautiful day for the magnificent Highland games at Hororata. The 'clan alley' was busy and I enjoyed visiting other clans and hearing about clan members in New Zealand.

Newsletter of the
New Zealand branch of the
Clan Matheson Society

December 2022

Issue 169

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Connecting people with Matheson heritage



It was my first opportunity to ask people with Matheson heritage about ideas for clan activities in the year ahead. Our draft plans for 2023 were shown to visitors and suggestions for activities noted for report back to the clan committee. We gave visitors to the tent the new Clan Matheson flier that has information about the New Zealand branch and how get in touch and be involved. If anyone was not receiving the newsletter, they could subscribe immediately on my cell phone!

At 2.00pm I welcomed a small gathering of people with an interest in Matheson heritage and made a few comments about Clan Matheson New Zealand and its plans for the future. Then we enjoyed shortbread and toffees and shared stories about our Matheson connections. There is more about the Hororata Highland Games and dates of future games elsewhere in this newsletter.

You can learn Scottish Gaelic with Duolingo, and practise vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation

I plan to be at the Waipu Highland games on 1 January alongside Rodger in the Matheson tent. I look forward to meeting more of you, and at our gathering at 2 pm hearing your stories and ideas for clan activities.

The trustees are still waiting to hear about the registration of the clan's trust as a charity. This decision will be reported to you as soon as we know.

As we approach the Christmas, Hogmanay and summer holidays again, it is a year in which family and time together are ever more important. This is also a time to celebrate our Matheson connections and the rich history and culture we have been given.

Haud Hogmanay, Meri Kirimete, Nga mihi mot e Tau, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year.

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Clan Matheson New Zealand

www.clanmatheson.org.nz

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Gàidhlig

That's the name of Gaelic in its own language. What is Gaelic, who still speaks it and where, and how can you learn more of this language?

What is Gaelic?

Gaelic means 'pertaining to the Gaels', who were a Celtic group living in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. There are three types of Gaelic language: Scottish Gaelic (pronounced 'gallic' or 'gah-lic'), Irish Gaelic (pronounced 'gay-lic') and Manx Gaelic, spoken on the Isle of Man.

The map shows how Gaelic was spoken across almost all of Scotland about 1,000 years ago (light green) and most of the Highlands about 300 years ago (medium green). It is now restricted mainly to the remote Highlands, especially the Outer Hebrides (dark green).



Just to complicate things, Scotland has three languages: English, Gaelic and Scots. Scots (or Lowland Scots) isn't a Celtic language, but is related to English.

Linguists argue about whether it is a distinct language or a dialect of English, though most would consider it a separate language that is closely related to English.

Robbie Burns wrote in Scots — lines such as "we twa hae run about the braes/and pou'd the gowans fine" are in that language, not Gaelic.

Who speaks Gaelic?

Gaelic was first brought to Scotland around the 6th century AD by settlers from Ireland. The language quickly spread across the country and became the main language spoken across medieval Scotland, and thrived in Scotland for many centuries.

Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic are quite distinct. Again, linguists argue about whether they are separate languages or dialects of the same language, though in political and cultural terms they are usually regarded as separate languages.

As with many languages, the use of Gaelic declined in favour of a language more widely used — in this case English. As in many other countries, both carrot and stick were at work. There was active suppression of the language, but a strong driver was also the economic and social opportunities obtained through fluency in English as Scotland became more internationally connected.

Both the English and Lowland Scots thought of Gaelic as an uncivilised language and suppressed it; for instance in 1616 the royals even banned many institutions from teaching the language.

In the mid-1700s the failure of the Jacobite revolution saw further suppression of Highland culture, including the Gaelic language.

... Gàidhlig

The number of Gaelic speakers continued to decline well into the 20th century, though as with other minority languages there are now concerted efforts to revive it. The Bòrd na Gàidhlig is the public body charged with promoting Gaelic in Scotland. The language was made an official language of Scotland in 2005.

[Here](#) is a short Youtube video about Scottish Gaelic today.

Saving Gaelic won't be an easy job, as it is regarded as definitely endangered. The most recent census (in 2011, thanks to covid) showed that only 87,000 people in Scotland had some Gaelic language skills, and of them only 32,000 people were able to understand, speak, read and write it.

That's less than 0.6% of the population. Some have questioned whether spending tens of millions of pounds per year to foster the language is warranted.

In the next issue we'll look at where Gaelic was exported to as Scots migrated across the globe. Spoiler alert — New Zealand features!



*Road sign on the Isle of Lewis
Try pronouncing those place names!*

Doug Matheson 1931 – 2022

Zelda Matheson of Dunedin sent in an obituary of her brother-in-law Doug Matheson, who died in April. Written by writer and publisher Ian F Grant, it is an interesting account of a varied and successful life.

Starting on a Taieri Plains farm in a family with strong Scottish connections, Doug's career took him via broadcasting and engineering to management and governance in IBM around the Asia-Pacific region. His 2004 book on governance is a standard for MBA classes, and Doug lectured on the topic widely in New Zealand and overseas.

The obituary is in the 1 June 2022 issue of the *Wairarapa Times-Age*, which you can find through PressReader via your local library.

Zelda notes that Doug and his siblings — her husband Athol and their sister June — died within the space of a year, which meant the loss of a whole generation of the family of Percy and Mina Matheson of Otaika, Taieri Plains. Our sympathy for your loss, Zelda.



Hororata Highland Games 2022

Clan Matheson members Rodger Matheson, Eden Matheson, Graeme Matheson, Ellen McCrae and Lena Orum enjoyed meeting other Mathesons and other clans at the 2022 Hororata Highland Games. Our tent was in the clan alley along with thirteen other clans. It was heartening to see the interest in clan connection on a day of such celebration of our shared Scottish heritage.

Local contacts

Rodger is a true local and had travelled from Auckland with Matheson banners, fascinating maps of clan areas, copies of our informative newsletter and books relating to Scottish heritage. Rodger and Eden had caught up with their family the day before. Graeme arrived with a stock of shortbread and juice (yes, the non-alcoholic kind). Lena brought posters about the New Zealand clan, the Matheson grant and the plan with ideas the committee has for the year ahead.



It was fun to hear Rodger and Graeme as well as David Lees reminiscing about their school days at 'West', a very local little gathering as you can see in the article on the next page.

Matheson interest

Visitors to the Matheson tent often enquired about Matheson ancestors from generations ago. It was interesting to hear about their Matheson families, where they came from in Scotland and their time in New Zealand.

We provided information about some Matheson activities in New Zealand. Those who gathered at 2.00 pm enjoyed sharing Matheson stories and shortbread!



The massed pipe band filled the arena with typically stirring music during the opening ceremony. The clan parade was at the centre, and it was certainly an uplifting experience to march into the arena with the pipe bands' support. We were welcomed by the Malvern Area Combined Primary School kapa haka group and the 2022 games chieftain Kate Foster.

Congratulations to all competitors and place-getters who provided such wonderful entertainment for the 10,000 people who attended.

... Hororata Highland Games 2022

'Clan Hororata'

Congratulations are due too to all the hundreds of volunteers who make up 'Clan Hororata', and to the Hororata Community Trust for running one of the biggest Scottish festivals in the southern hemisphere.

All profits from the Hororata Highland Games are invested into the Hororata community. The next project is to develop the Hororata Hall and the land around it into a community hub.

You can find out more about the games and the community at hororata.org.nz/highland-games and see all the photos.



Hororata Highland Games – 5th November 2022



Left – L to R
Graeme Matheson,
David Lees,
Rodger Matheson.

Right – L to R
Rodger Matheson,
Graeme Matheson

Graeme Matheson and Rodger Matheson have been helping each other looking after the Matheson Clan stand at the Hororata Highland Games for a number of years now. Rodger brings his SUV full of gear from Kumeu, North Island each year. We chat with them there when we are looking after the Canterbury Genealogy Society stand (Family History), usually close by.

It wasn't until David walked across to them and asked them if they realized that they had both attended 'West' that they knew that they had that in common as well. Though not attending at the same time, with no overlap, they now have even more in common. (Graeme - CWHS 1955-58; Rodger - CWHS 1962-65)

Discovering an old connection. From the newsletter for past pupils of what is now Hagley College, but was known as Christchurch West High School back when Graeme and Rodger attended

Family history research

by Andrew Matheson

Genealogy programs

So — you're making good inroads into tracing your family connections. Direct ancestors, their siblings, the siblings' descendants and random in-laws. But it's getting harder to keep track of who they are and how they're connected to each other.

Hopefully you didn't go too far before realising that card indexes and large sheets of paper with family trees sketched out have real limitations.

Specialist genealogy computer programs have made life a lot easier for family historians. They can do a lot for you, starting with recording information on each individual and going on to build a family tree. You can document your research sources, make notes and identify areas for further work.

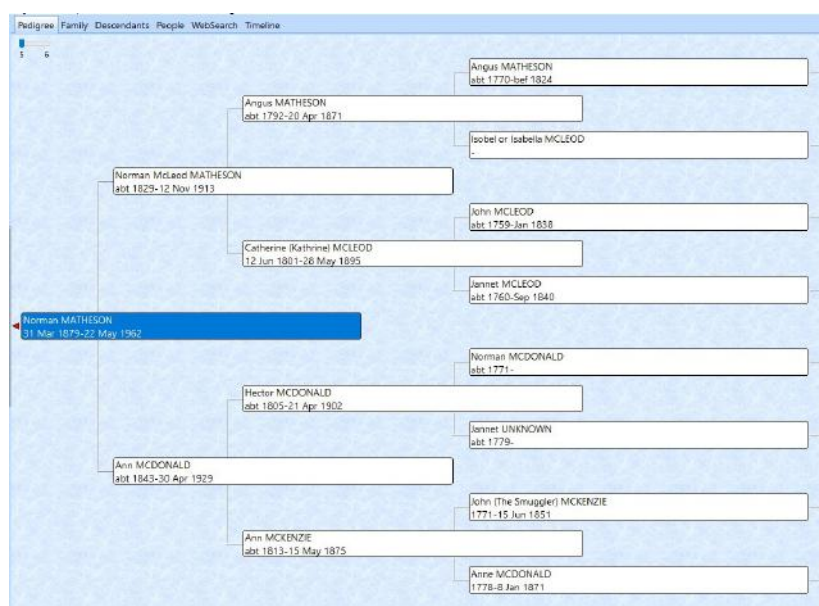
You can print ancestral charts and descendant charts starting with any individual (including yourself!) and illustrate them with photos and audio or video recordings. You can export family trees to share with others. Some will let you export content as a book.

There are many programs on the market. How do you decide which one is best for you? First think about what you want to do with the program, both now and in the future. Different products have different capabilities or strengths, so this is an essential step.

Then look at reviews — a quick search will show plenty of review sites. The best reviews will assess the strengths and weaknesses of each program, which will help you choose the most appropriate product for you if you've done that initial thinking. What's best for you might not be best for someone who has different interests or aims.

If you know someone who uses a program, ask them about their experience and have a look at it. Or try it yourself — many companies offer free trial periods or demonstration versions of their products.

In the end, don't agonise too much about picking the wrong product. Any of the major ones will do a good job for you. You can switch to another program even after you've entered a lot of data, because all the major programs allow you to export data in 'vanilla' format (called a GEDCOM file) that can be imported into another program.



... family history research

In one way the best program is the one you're using. I use RootsMagic — after considering my options I started out with it years ago. It works well for me so I've never contemplated making the effort of changing to another system. I'm still on version 6 even though 8 is the latest, again because it does what I want and I don't see the value in upgrading at the moment.

These are some of the most popular genealogy software products:

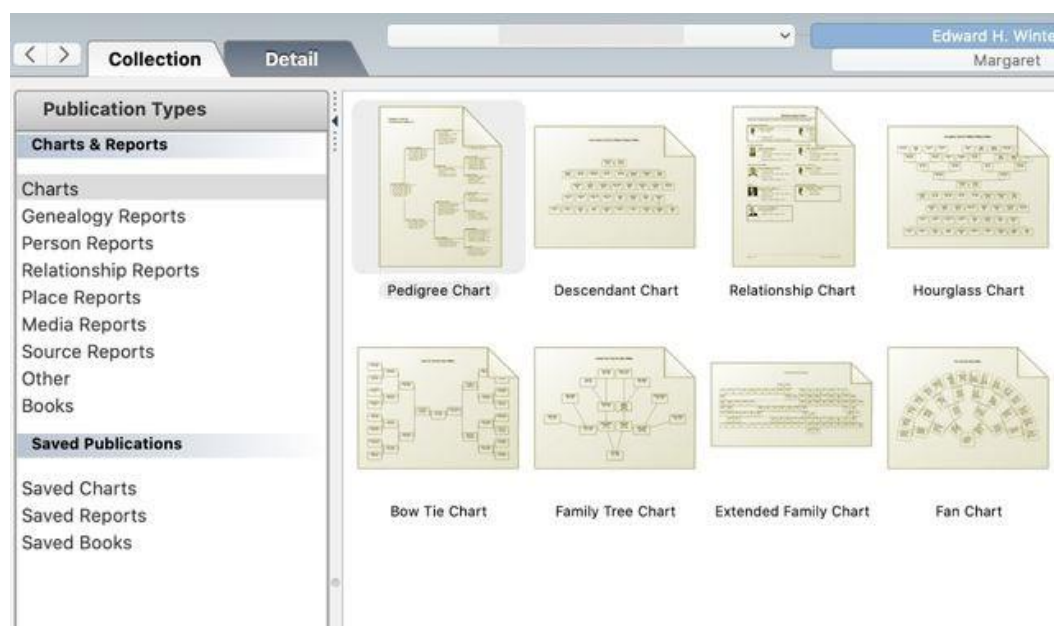
- Family Historian
- Family Tree Builder
- Family Tree Maker
- Legacy
- Reunion
- RootsMagic.

But wait. Isn't buying a program and downloading it to your computer a bit old school? What about online family trees? You could upload all your information to the cloud, or even work collaboratively with people around the world.

This is another option. More about that in the next issue.

Do you have any tips to share on family history programs?

Make a comment in the Clan Matheson family history forum or Facebook group.



Spreading the word

Now that we're making our newsletter available free to anyone who's interested, we are able to share it with other clan organisations in New Zealand. Our contact in Clan Ross wrote after receiving the September issue: "Many thanks for this edition of your Clan Matheson newsletter."

"As always a fantastic read, especially the articles on the Queen's death and Eilean Donan Castle. It will be circulated through our Clan in due course."

It's good to be able to swap stories with other clans in New Zealand.

Follow our Facebook group

Interested in what Mathesons are doing in New Zealand? We publish news about this and what Clan Matheson New Zealand is doing through our [Facebook group](#).

If you don't use Facebook, you can still follow our news on the home page of our [website](#). Just scroll down the page a little to below the blue Facebook button. The six most recent posts are displayed, so you'll need to check back regularly to keep up to date.



Check out the Clan Matheson New Zealand Facebook group.

Clan Matheson Facebook



Zelda Matheson of Dunedin took out a first prize in the recent Otago Rose Society show. Zelda is a keen family historian, and has contributed regularly to our website and newsletter. Well done, Zelda.

[Read More](#)

🕒 6 December 2022



More than a game is a charity using sport to contribute to mental health and wellbeing. Co-founder Graham Matheson played in a record-setting 45-hour football game in Wellington that raised more than \$50,000 for the charity. Great work!

[Read More](#)

🕒 6 December 2022



After disruptions because of covid lockdowns, the summer's Highland games programme kicked off at Hororata. Clan Matheson was there. You can read about this in our December newsletter.

[Read More](#)

🕒 8 November 2022



This famous whisky distillery was established at Morangie Farm near Tain by William Matheson in 1843. It has expanded to house 12 stills, two of which resemble the original gin stills that William started with. Glenmorangie is a fine Scotch.

[Read More](#)

🕒 3 November 2022



James Mathieson gets his Dunedin softball team in the game at the opening of the season. Photo: ODT.

[Read More](#)

🕒 21 October 2022



Daniel Mathieson (of Christchurch, and not the Zespri CEO of the same name) has set up his own insurance broking business after 15 years in the industry. It's called Sherpa, after the mountaineering folk who are "renowned for their skill and guidance, building strong relationships with those they provide..."

[Read More](#)

🕒 17 October 2022

Ice cream from plants, not cows

Jenni Matheson of Taranaki is poised to take her innovative ice cream business to the next level.

As a vegan Jenni has for a long time been experimenting with plant-based foods. Ice cream caught her attention, and after trying different plant sources she settled on the humble cauliflower. She says it's creamier than others, has a subtle flavour and neutral colours.

Jenni did well in an innovation competition in New Plymouth and then teamed up with a food technology graduate from Massey University, Mrinali Kumar.

Now, with the help of some fourth-year food technology students, the pair have moved from benchtop production in one-litre batches to producing 600 litres at a time. This isn't just a matter of multiplying everything by 600, but making changes to ingredients, equipment and processing.

Jenni and Mrinali's company is poised for the big time, as early next year their plant-based ice cream will be added to the menu of national chain Hell Pizza. The product is called Kinda Ice Cream (it's kinda like ice cream), and you can follow the company's progress on their [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



Jenni Matheson with Kinda icecream

Art award



Dunedin sculptor Kylie Matheson was a finalist in this year's prestigious Portage Ceramics Awards in Auckland. Her entry, featuring a badger, continues her fascination with animals as subjects for her work.

This isn't the first time Kylie has done well in the Portage, as she picked up a merit prize in 2019.

You can find out where her work is exhibited and sold through her [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

Kylie Matheson working on another animal sculpture (Photo: Otago Daily Times)

News and events



Come and visit the Clan Matheson tent at a Highland games in 2023. You could even join in the clan parade or enter one of the competitions.

There will be a Matheson gathering at 2 pm at Waipu and Paeroa.

Northland

The [Waipu Highland Games](#) and will be the delayed 150th celebration of the first Highland games in the town.

Sunday 1 January 2023, Caledonian Park, St Mary's Road, Waipu.

Manawatu

The [Turakina Highland Games](#) (the 158th) will take place on Saturday 28 January 2023 at the Turakina Domain, Cameron Road (off State Highway 3 at Turakina).

Waikato

The [Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo](#) will be on Saturday 11 February 2023 at the Paeroa Domain, 6 Willoughby Street, Paeroa.



New branding for Waipu museum

The museum at Waipu has recently rebranded itself as the Waipu Scottish Migration Museum, to better explain its focus on the migration of Highland Scots to Nova Scotia and eventually to Waipu. The rebranding includes a new logo and fresh signage around the town and out on the nearby State Highway 1.

The museum will be open on New Year's Day, when the town will be packed with people enjoying the 150th Waipu Highland Games.



Photos: Hororata Highland Games

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

www.clanmatheson.org

Newsletter

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News	news@clanmatheson.org.nz
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Website	web@clanmatheson.org.nz
Secretary	secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz
Chair	chair@clanmatheson.org.nz

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.