
Profiling immigrants

If you're interested in your Matheson heritage, by now you've probably traced your family back to someone or several people who emigrated from Scotland. It's great to learn their individual migration stories — where they came from, how they travelled to New Zealand and why they made such a big move.

But what was the wider context of this migration? How many came, from where in Scotland and to which parts of New Zealand? Were they urban or rural dwellers, and what were their occupations?

Historians Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn studied shipping records and death registers to build up a detailed picture of immigrants to New Zealand from Scotland, England and Ireland in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Their findings might surprise you. For instance, the typical Scot didn't wear a kilt or speak Gaelic, and wasn't driven off a farm by the Highland Clearances.

Well-researched and readable, this is a good account of a significant foundation of current New Zealand society. It's available as an e-book or in hard copy from second-hand bookshops.

Phillips, Jock; Hearn, Terry (2008) *Settlers: New Zealand immigrants from England, Ireland and Scotland 1800–1945*. Auckland University Press; 221 pp.

