

CLAN MATHESON

News Letter No. 22

March 1973

The Annual General Meeting and Dinner was held at the Quality Inn, opposite Victoria Station, London on Saturday, the 28th October, 1972.

The Chief of the Clan, and the Chief's successor, Major Sir Torquil Matheson, were able to be present. The next Annual Meeting will be held at the same venue on Saturday, 27th October, 1973, at 6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m. Those able to attend should let the Secretary know by the day before at the latest.

A suggestion was made regarding the possibility of a clan re-union in the Lochalsh district, or in Edinburgh. The success of this would depend on the response and support received.

We have received a most interesting letter from Mr. Norman J. Matheson of 45 Burriss Street South, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, on a recent visit, (or "pilgrimage"), which he and his wife made last year to all parts of Scotland, and whilst in Stornoway, visited Provost Alexander Matheson, from whom he learnt of our own clan activities. Although thinking he had no relations left in Scotland, he soon discovered the existence of "dozens of cousins", mostly in Caithness. His father was born in Berriedale, Caithness about 100 years ago and upon a return visit in 1902, kept a diary of the trip, which Norman Matheson now has.

Captain A. F. and Mrs. Matheson of Brahan Castle, Ross-shire, visited Australia in June last year to attend the wedding of their son Andrew in Sydney on 16th June, 1972. They intended to return to Scotland via the U.S.A.

Their youngest daughter Janet was married to Mr. Bonen at Brahan in April, 1972. There was a large gathering at the reception which was held in excellent weather, after which the couple left in a helicopter.

Our Treasurer Malcolm Mathieson has unfortunately had to resign his post as Treasurer due to his moving to an out of London address and consequently changed circumstances. We are much indebted to Malcolm for his valuable services during his period of office. In his place we are pleased to welcome Mrs. Margaret Shaw who is the daughter of our convener Ronald Matheson.

The following News Letters are required from any members who may have copies to spare—Nos. 1 to 6 inclusive, 12, 13 and 14. Members wishing for spare copies of other numbered News Letters should apply to the Secretary.

The following alterations should be made to the Membership List:—

Mrs. Elizabeth Cox, delete Annual, read Life Member.

The Lady Elizabeth Matheson new address: Cedar House,
Woodbridge, Sussex.

Miss Iona Matheson now Mrs. Copley, 19 Moreton Terrace,
SW.1.

We regret to have heard of the decease of the following
last year. No details available.

Miss Agnes Matheson, Perth.

Miss Isobel Matheson, Gourrock.

Please inform the Secretary of any change of address, etc.

CONVENER'S REVIEW

Shortly after I became Convener five years ago I wrote a survey of the Society's progress since its inauguration in 1961 and the lines on which I thought we might be able to develop. Truth compels me to say that while, in some ways, we have maintained our position, in a general sense we have not really developed at all.

There has been a steady, if not spectacular, flow of new members, mostly those in middle age, but a tendency amongst the younger members gradually to fall away. There is, these days, so much else to attract the younger generation while some of those of maturer years perhaps find other interests, or simply that the sheer complexity of modern life absorbs their energies.

The Historians, as sometimes happens with Historians, Archeologists and the like, seem rather to have withdrawn themselves, although I always hope that one or other of them will produce a book or even an article for the Newsletter. We have had enquiries from Mathesons, principally abroad, about their family history and we have been able to publish, from information kindly provided by Sir Torquil Matheson and Mr. Mackay, interesting notes on the families of past Chiefs and a diary kept by a Matheson in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. We have not, principally through lack of funds, been able to develop the "Benevolent" side, attendance at the Annual Dinner and General Meeting has fallen off and a very well produced recruiting brochure sent out to Mathesons, in at any rate the Southern half of England and selected parts of Scotland, met with very little success. Our proposal to form an Edinburgh branch of the Society was enthusiastically received when the Clan Chief and Secretary held a meeting there but local enthusiasm did not actually result in the formation of a branch. Far more interest is apparent abroad than in the home country and Isobel Dougherty has been indefatigable on the Society's behalf in Canada.

To the extent that criticism is implied in what I have said so far, I have been an offender. The Chief has done what he can to bring in new members but the fact is that the Society has been

kept alive by Dick, our Secretary, Colin, our Membership Secretary, who also sees to all our printing, Malcolm, our Treasurer, and Isobel in Canada. We are also indebted to Alec Matheson for welcoming visiting Mathesons to Brahan Castle in Ross and Cromarty and to Provost Alexander Matheson for a similar welcome in his home in Stornoway.

We have to face the facts that the clan was dispersed and that neither the Chief nor his successor have lands in Scotland where we could hold any kind of annual gathering although there are growing "pockets" of Mathesons in areas such as Lochalsh. We have also to accept that many clubs and societies are facing problems similar to ours. Some of their Chairmen are even more plaintive in their notes than I. It is also a sad feature of modern life that the needs of society are subjugated to commercial profit and in my trip to Kyle of Lochalsh last year by "The Hebridean Express" (partly in protest at the decision to close the Kyle railway line), I felt how much poorer that area will be. It does not need much imagination to visualise the desolation of Kyle of Lochalsh itself without the bustle and life of its railway. It is even more sad that Scotsmen in Scotland seem, on the whole, to be somewhat apathetic about their own country.

We cannot emulate the larger clan societies with their museums, annual gatherings and prosperity.

But I am convinced that the name Matheson means a great deal, especially to Mathesons overseas and that this will increase rather than decrease as the years go on. Whatever Lord Lyon may have said on the subject, the Clan Societies are the clans and the force which binds Clansmen and Clanswomen together as a family under its hereditary or appointed Chieftains.

The best ways in which we in England and Scotland can fulfill our purpose are by offering hospitality to Mathesons from overseas on holiday and I hope that Members who are able to do so will write and tell the Secretary. We must make the Newsletter as interesting and topical as possible with news of the doings and activities of Mathesons. Contributions of all kinds to the Newsletter are welcome and nobody need worry in case their contributions lack literary merit. The stories of Mathesons now living would make interesting reading and perhaps some clansmen and clanswomen will take their courage in both hands and give us their "autobiographies". As a start I will do mine, and hope for the best. It is also encouraging to the Society's Officers and the Chief, who loyally supports us, if attendance at the Annual Dinner is sufficiently large to make it seem really worth while. All suggestions for the welfare and development of the Society will be gratefully received. By this means I believe that local groups of Mathesons overseas will come to appreciate our

function in the Matheson family. Clan Christmas cards should also be used when possible.

It has been suggested that we should alter our name to Clan Matheson — dropping the word Society — and unless serious objections are received, this will be proposed at the Annual Meeting next year.

Lastly, Conveners for example, have tended to stay in office until circumstances have made it necessary for them to relinquish their appointments. But this is not one of the laws of the Medes and Persians and I hope that Ladies and Gentlemen will come forward and offer their services, either in some particular field where they feel that they can help or as Members of the Committee.

RONALD MATHESON,
Convener.

Some dozen or so booklets by W. Matheson, Esq., M.A., including the tradition of the Mathesons, the genealogies of the Mathesons, etc., are available from Mr. Hugh Baron, Honorary Secretary, Gaelic Society, 92 Academy Street, Inverness, at 25p each, including postage, or 40p for overseas.