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Clan Matheson Society

NEWSLETTER No. 48 Nov 1993

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Chief of the Clan :

Major Sir Fergus Matheson of Matheson,
Baronet of Lochalsh.

Price to non-members £1 or local equivalent

THE CHIEF'S MESSAGE.

Hedenham, October 1993.

I have been asked to provide a message to the Clan, previously always written by my brother. He was known to so many of you here and overseas and took such an interest in your lives since assuming the Chiefship, I thought I might be permitted to record a very brief account of how I remember him over the many years we had together, Childhood, School Boy, Soldier, Clansman and latterly Gentleman at Arms.

Named Torquhil after our father who had been given a MacLeod name being the great grandson of General Norman MacLeod of MacLeod of Dunvegan in Skye. To our family he was known as Tormod. Our early life was spent following the drum which meant London, Norfolk, India (Western Command which is now roughly Pakistan). As children we met a lot of the military which mostly consisted of Indians, wonderful and loyal people and soldiers; they were not to be forgotten throughout his life. When Father retired from the Army in 1935 after 45 years service, he took us home to Lochalsh. His early life had been divided between Duncraig in Wester Ross and Ardross in the East. Very quickly we fitted in to the landscape and grew to love that part of Scotland which so many of our kinsman from abroad come every year to find and witness the scenery known so well to their grandfathers and beyond.

When the last war came we were at school. In our holidays we often helped Father with his Home Guard work as, being too old for military service, he had been recruited to raise a force of Local Defence Volunteers, the original name given to the Home Guard. The area he was given to look after was very similar to the one his grand father, John Matheson of Attadale had covered as a Fencible in the Napoleonic wars. I well recall early on in the last war, we helped unpack rifles in Mr Donald MacKerlich's workshop in Kyle. Covered in solid grease at the end of the 1914/18 War, they had lain in store until being sent over from the United States as part of lend lease and were issued to the L.D.V.

In 1943 Tormod joined the Coldstream Guards as a

Recruit. Comissioned from Mons 161 (R.M.C.) O.C.T.U. the following year, he went to Normandy with the 5th Battalion of our Regiment. Wounded near Lingen, he was later able to rejoin his Battalion and remained with it until the end of the war in Europe. He then volunteered to be transferred to the 3rd Battalion which was earmarked to go to Japan. Fortunately fighting in that theatre of war finished too, so the following year he found himself in Palestine. Soldiering in the Middle East followed for the next 6 or 7 years. Then came marriage to Serena and the arrival of Nell

and Bella. They all then spent 3 wonderful years in Kenya, Tormod serving with the King's African Rifles.

Shortly after retirement, on the death of Colonel Bertram Matheson, late Punjab Frontier force, Tormod took over the mantle as Chief of the Clan. Up till then, the Chiefship had rested with the Bennetsfield branch and on their demise moved to Lochalsh. Undoubtably Tormod enjoyed his time as Chief. He loved meeting people and was a great getter on with all walks of life. A great friend of ours from early days, living in Skye wrote the other day saying "He was always a chief from



TAM, TGM & FJM at Duirinish

school days. I would willingly have gone to war with your Clan, under his command." and I think that summed him up, a good leader and a warrior at heart. Since his death I have learnt of many acts of kindness to others for which he was responsible. He was intensely interested in the history of our Clan and of Lochalsh, a lot of which he had gathered in from many notable people living in the district and fortunately, some of it he recorded. This love for the Clan and Lochalsh was only matched by his other big interest, that of the British and Indian Armies. He loved his Regiment and was quite an authority on many military matters.

Many of you in this country and abroad will have been shocked at his sudden passing but our hearts must go out to Serena, Nell and Bella in their tragic loss, all of whom have played such a large part of helping him with the work of our Clan.

Fergus Matheson of Matheson

IN MEMORIAM

Torquhil died suddenly in the early hours of Good Friday. His funeral service was held on Friday, 16th April in St George's Church, Beckington. The Church was packed with mourners from all over the country and from the many aspects of his life. His coffin was covered with an ancient family plaid and his medals and bonnet with the three eagles's feathers were laid on it. The first reading was read by Bella Craven, his daughter, and the second by Michael Thorp, MRCVS. An old friend Malcolm Fraser gave the address. The Last Post was played by a drummer of the Coldstream Guards and his coffin was lead from the Church to the Flowers of the Forest played by his godson, Major Harry Nickerson, Scots Guards. The following day there was a short Service followed by Cremation.

There was a Memorial Service at the Guards Chapel in London. This too was packed with friends and relations. It

was a beautiful service. Jean Fries, her brother Armand and his wife Phyllis came all the way from the States for the London service.

His ashes were interred in Lochalsh Burial Ground amongst the stones of his ancestors on 27th July. The Very Rev. Dr. James Matheson took the Service which included his favorite paraphrase, Behold the mountain of the Lord, as well as George Matheson's hymn, 'O Love that wilt not let me go', which had been sung at each service. At all three services, the organ was played by his son-in-law Will Craven, Bella's husband. There was also a strong overseas representation at Lochalsh including Abigail Butler from Australia, Bob Matheson, John Aakesson and Bill and Margie Matheson from the States and Gordon and Joan Harbour from New Zealand.

Cha'n fhaod gu'n dean sinn di chuimhn ort oir bha thu dileasduinn.

"It cannot be that we will forget you because you were faithful to us."

from the New Zealand Branch Newsletter.

PART OF AN ADDRESS

given by Malcolm Fraser

I first met Torquhil before the 1939 War, in the north of Scotland, at his family home at Duirinish in Wester Ross, which was close to my grandmother's home at Strome Ferry and we have remained firm friends ever since.

Torquhil was a man of many qualities and had a wide variety of interests besides being a natural leader. He also had that wonderful gift of being able to relate to people from all walks of life whatever their background and whatever their social standing - coupled with this, he possessed that priceless gift of a real sense of fun which was never far below the surface.

Torquhil loved the countryside and was devoted to his animals, all of which he knew individually by name. He also knew every stone and blade of grass on the farm and threw his considerable energies ably supported by Serena into making sure a none too easy grass farm was run to the best possible advantage.

As Chief of Clan Matheson, he and Serena greatly enjoyed travelling to clan gatherings both in this country and overseas, where they were warmly welcomed on every occasion. Torquhil took the greatest delight in meeting his fellow clansmen from all over the world and they in turn, considered it a great honour and privilege to meet their clan chief. As a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries for Scotland he was a keen military and highland historian and he had almost completed updating the Matheson clan history at the time of his death.

He had a simple but deep seated religious faith, so typical of the highlanders of the west coast of Ross-shire, where he spent as much of his free time as he could afford, and which he loved so well. He was, himself, a true highlander, who was never happier than when he could be at his family home

at Duirinish, and was able to wear his favourite kilt and meet and talk to all his many friends.

His life on earth, so tragically cut short when he still had so much to give, will stand as an example and an inspiration to all those many people who knew and loved him, and to us at this, his funeral service, who can feel that we do ourselves honour in saluting the memory of a distinguished highland chief, a fine soldier, and a man who devoted his life to the service of others.

I recall the words of the prophet Micah which seem to me to be a fitting epitaph to Torquhil: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." I know we can truthfully say that Torquhil did just that.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

IN THE GUARDS CHAPEL, LONDON.

Lyman Matheson, Secretary, U.S.A. Branch

I attended the Memorial Service at the Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks, in the Buckingham Palace area of London, along with my wife Phyllis and my sister Jean Fries of St Louis.

It was a magnificent and stately memorial service with music by the Coldstream Guards Band, Pipe Major D. Fleming of the Scots Guards, played "Flowers of the Forest" on the bagpipes and the organist was Mr William Craven (son-in-law). Major Sir Fergus Matheson of Matheson (brother) read the first lesson and Maj-Gen Sir George Burns, Colonel, Coldstream Guards, the second lesson. The address was given by Brigadier P.N.R. Stewart Richardson.

PART OF AN ADDRESS

given by Peter Stewart-Richardson

We are assembled in the Guards Chapel which means so much to many of you to remember with thanks the life of Torquhil Alexander Matheson or, as some of us know him, Tormod. St George's Church at Beckington was filled to over-flowing and today the Chapel is full to capacity. A measure of the love and the respect in which he is held.

Torquhil's father, a Coldstream general, was a Highlander from Lochalsh on the west coast of Scotland. He was brought up in the Scottish traditions of strong clan kinship and of open hearth Highland hospitality. This conduct unconsciously and by example rubbed off on Tormod as was demonstrated in the way he lived. The General was also typical of his generation - duty came first, only the highest standard for himself and others was accepted and loyalty extended from the King to the most junior soldier in his command. Torquhil was a 'chip off the old block' - a leader, smart, only accepting the highest of standards and was acutely aware of his responsibility to others.

Torquhil's mother was a Keppel of Quidenham, Norfolk, whose family produced a rash of Admirals and Generals. She had a splendid sense of humour which, as a young VAD during the Great War, must have been a tonic to the patients. However it was frowned upon by the authorities who threatened her dismissal if she did not curb her 'Tom Foolery' as they called it. However when in a crisis, as you would expect of a Keppel, she rose to the occasion and was made an Associate of the Royal Red Cross (ARRC) for saving someone's life. Torquhil inherited this sense of fun.

His early days were spent at Quidenham with his Keppel grandparents whilst his father was serving in India. Here, as a young boy, he lived in an Edwardian atmosphere, in a large and happy family which included the old retainers who looked after them. Sidel, the butler, assembled the household for prayers each morning and one of his many duties was as banker to the boys. He held the key to the money box in the study and has been described to me by Fergus as a very good and lifelong friend. On the General's

return they moved to Lochalsh where life was extremely happy and where due to weather, the hills and the sea, boys are turned into fit, hardy and self-reliant young men; they were of the age and had the spirit to benefit. An example of their recreation was the family eight oar boat, Inverinate, which the General discovered and after a re-fit by Seochan Matheson, they would put to sea with the General as stroke, Fergus as bow, Lady Elizabeth and Torquhil as 2 and 3. For anyone who has not rowed in the sea I can assure you it is very hard work. But what excellent training for the future Captain of the Boats at Eton who stroked the Eight to win the Schools race at Henley in 1943. He also learned to play the pipes and was a founder member of the Eton Corps Pipes & Drums. Sgt. MacMillan who needed two kilts to surround

his girth drilled and trained them. On Field Days in Windsor Great Park they piped the Corps up Windsor Hill which I'm told, due to lack of puff, the Brigade pipers do not do.

With this background he set out to join the Regiment. At the Depot Recruit Matheson learned the trade of a Guardsman under a Grenadier Squad Instructor - Lance Sergeant Sheldon. I remember Torquhil telling me that when he went on his first leave, he polished up his brasses on the train as he knew his father would meet him. The General was so impressed with his turnout that he wrote to congratulate his Squad Instructor - Sgt. Sheldon who is here today still treasures that letter. Torquhil was wounded in Germany with the 5th

Battalion - Sgt. Blades, his Platoon Sergeant, recently sent him a photograph of themselves before an attack and Torquhil replied naming the other NCOs and asking after many Guardsmen by name in case Sgt. Blades was still in touch with them. That is a measure of the concern Torquhil had for his Guardsmen.

Then came the 3rd Battalion tour in Palestine where he was mentioned in dispatches. He enjoyed this introduction to the East and was pleased to return in the early '50s to Libya and Egypt. During our sojourn in the Holy Land there was a particularly noisy night during which a truck load of 'buta gas' containers caught fire. Earlier on his way to 'Stand to' he passed the Mess, took the Colours off the wall and laid them on the table. This common sense and foresight avoided considerable damage to the Colours as a lump of metal went



Torquhil Alexander Matheson of Matheson

through the wall where the Colours would have been. When the 1st Battalion joined us I watched Fergus and him meet in the Mess. The smiles of pleasure were great to see and like two huge bears they started cuffing each other with joy - it was as well not to get in their way. They have been firm friends and true brothers all their life.

Then came a spell in London, the tour I mentioned in Libya and Egypt and London Duties in 1954. A very smart officer and a certainty for any Guard of Honour or the Birthday Parade - we couldn't match him. However his sense of humour was never far below the surface - one morning on our exchange of Guards he approached me with a grin from ear to ear so I knew something was up and, instead of the mythical 'key', he passed me a live mouse! We made the mouse a Freeman of the Forecourt. He or Fergus, depending which Battalion was at home, followed their father's example in organising the Boat Club Regatta at Maidenhead - battalion fours, mop fighting, punting and canoes - what fun we had entirely due to them. During that year he took the most important step in his life - he married Serena, a Peto, whose father was a Coldstreamer and served in younger days on General Sir Torquhil's Staff. Torquhil was posted to Mons Officer Cadet School where many young cadets will remember their Company Commander with, like all the people to whom I have spoken, considerable respect and affection, even though the words 'Finish him off' will remind those when they failed to remember the initials or decorations of some notable as requested by Torquhil. Then the family went to Kenya as he joined 5 Kings African Rifles - a lovely house on stilts, horses and dogs, many left by friends who knew they'd find a good home 'chez Matheson'. At the time of the mutiny Torquhil continued to ride into barracks on horseback confident in the loyalty of the 5th Battalion which was confirmed by the smart and smiling Askaris who saluted him en route.

Home again and retirement to Standerwick in 1965 where he became a very active and highly respected member of the community. He first dairy farmed and Serena and he worked all hours of the day and night. Latterly he changed to a suckler herd of the rare British Whites. On one occasion he was walking on his farm to find some officers working on some tactical problem. An embarrassed senior gunner officer approached the 'cowman' dressed in the appropriate 'health & safety' kit - white hat etc. - to explain why they had failed to ask permission. He was surprised to find that this 'cowman' knew as much about DF & SOS tasks as he did.

Dairy farming is a full time job but he committed himself fully to the County & Local Community - Deputy Lieutenant, 3 years with the Wiltshire Regiment TA Battalion, Royal Bath & West Council running the Flower Tent, President of the Frome NFU & of the Agricultural Society, a member of Beckington Parish Council as well as President of the Bath Coldstream Association.

He was a traditional Christian arguing fiercely for the Book of Common Prayer which he read when taking Mattins - he considered it was the people in the pews who counted. The Rural Dean, or as Torquhil called him the Ayatollah, tells of his role as a PCC member and Lay Chairman of the Deanery Synod. Meetings started on time,

speakers' time limited and he exercised numerous but firm control which included his NAAFI break! Everyone respected him and enjoyed his less formal but effective control. At his funeral, as Torquhil would wish it and as a show of respect, the Rural Dean insisted the other prelates were formed up, ready to move on time and the service started on the dot - it just had to be right for Torquhil.

In spite of all these commitments there were two appointments which appealed to him most - a Gentleman of Her Majesty's Body Guard and Clan chiefship. Tormod was appointed by Her Majesty to the Body Guard of Gentlemen at Arms in 1977 to be followed by Fergie, which delighted their mother, and two smarter Gentlemen it would be hard to find. Tormod played a leading role in the Body Guard becoming the Clerk of the Cheque and Adjutant. He was enthusiastic, loved working in that environment and, whilst he would have recommended a period of Spring Drills for the Gentlemen under the Axe Keeper, he respected their age and the fact that some of them were ex-Cavalry men. It is so very sad that he was not spared to take over as Lieutenant in June as appointed by Her Majesty the Queen.

In 1975 Torquhil took over the Chiefship of Clan Matheson on the death of his kinsman, Colonel Bertram Matheson, who had nominated the General, Tormod and Fergus in succession. Tormod was proud to wear the 3 feathers in his bonnet and his enthusiasm was matched by Serena who was brought up at Dundonnell in Wester Ross to the north of Lochalsh. She understood the meaning of Scottish Traditions and Highland hospitality. They took over the Clan Newsletter making contacts in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Norway and even Holland. They arranged a gathering at Duncraig Castle in 1981 which was a great success. They visited Canada on five occasions and were royally entertained. They loved their visits; this year they planned to visit New Zealand. Suddenly Standerwick became the Clan home and visitors came from all over the world. A true resurrection of Clan Spirit and all that it means to the Highlander. Once again it was the enthusiasm, the humour and the generosity of the Chief and his wife which the clansmen appreciated.

In Torquhil's passing we have lost a great character whose strength of character, humour, enthusiasm, generosity and his priceless gift of being able to relate to everyone regardless of their background or station will be sadly missed. The Clan has lost a Chief but Fergus will take over the Chiefship so all is well. The Queen's Body Guard of Gentlemen has lost its Lieutenant but some officer will take over. However, his family and friends have lost someone who cannot be replaced - Serena, you have 38 years of memories with Tormod and will remember with pleasure and pride whether in the milking parlour or in the Flower Tent, at the Gathering or at St James' Palace. Nell, you helped him with the British Whites and will have many happy memories of your father. Bella, how proud he must have been with the way you read the Reading in St. George's Church; you did it beautifully and you, Will, have given him much pleasure in the way that you played the organ at Beckington and today. He was lucky to have you four and you to have him.

Torquhil lived as St Peter in his letter advised the early Christians to live. He wrote:-

Honour all men
Love the Brotherhood
Fear God
Honour the King.

We have lost a man 'Larger than Life' who will be sadly missed.

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT KIRKTON

by Joan & Gordon Harbour, New Zealand.

On 27th July 1993 the ashes of the late Chief of the Clan, Major Sir Torquhil Matheson of Matheson, were interred in the family plot in the cemetery at Lochalsh Parish Church, Kirkton of Lochalsh. His family, friends, residents of Lochalsh and Clan members who gathered to pay their last respects, filled the church for the Memorial Service. Clan members came from the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The service was conducted by the Very Reverend James G. Matheson, who will be remembered by some from the 1950's years he spent as minister at Knox Church, Dunedin. The hymns were favourites of Sir Torquhil's - Psalm 100, O Love that wilt not let me go, and Paraphrase 18. The lessons were read by Farquhar MacRae, Lochalsh and Robert Matheson, United States. Rev. Matheson spoke of Sir Torquhil's strong sense of duty, patriotism, loyalty and faith. The mourners, many wearing the Ancient Matheson Tartan, then gathered round the family memorial. Sir Fergus committed his brother's ashes during a simple service concluding with Psalm 121, the Blessing and the piper's farewell. Afterwards, all were invited to tea at the Balmacara Hotel to meet the family.

Next day there was a picnic at Loch Achnahinnich and Duncraig Castle was opened for Clan members to visit. In the evening we met the Chief and told him more about the N.Z. Branch of the Clan.

ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE KIRKTON SERVICE

by Dr. James Matheson

On the 15th April last, Beckington Parish Church, where Torquhil's family have been members, was full to overflowing for his Funeral Service. He had been President of the local Farmers' Union, a Parish Councillor, a member of the Church Synod in the Deanery, loved and honoured in the community that was saddened by his sudden death.

Later, in May, there was a Service of Thanksgiving in the Guards Chapel in London - again a great company who knew him as a soldier, an officer in the Guards. He always cherished the proud tradition of service to Queen and country, and to the end of his life was a leading member of the Queen's Body Guard of Gentlemen at Arms.

Here in Lochalsh we have our own special reasons for sadness at his death, and for remembering him lovingly. His boyhood home was here. He loved the place - every hillock of it. He hoped to retire here to Duirinish when his work was

finished in the South. Sadly that is not to be. But he wanted to be buried here where his Clan is centred and his Chieftaincy was most real.

What an enthusiasm Torquhil had for living! Those of us who are Mathesons know how much thought and effort he put into his chieftaincy. He loved being chief and we loved having him there as our head. He looked the part, without being the least pompous about it, and with a presence one couldn't overlook. He seemed to know everyone of us by name. And he expected us to know everyone else by name! Through all the fun we had together one could not mistake his main concern, to keep what is right and precious in our heritage from the past. In our noisy, hectic, self-centred generation Torquhil stood rock-solid for our tradition of loyalty and service, and recognition of the sacredness of life.

Here is where his Christian Faith came in. He never said so to me in so many words, but I had the feeling that he looked on his headship of the clan as a kind of calling from God. Not that he took it solemnly. He was the merriest of men. But it did mean that he put his heart into it. He gave us Mathesons a special awareness of our long story and our real roots. Serena entered into his dedication wonderfully. If she tried to put the brakes on him, we didn't notice. We are forever grateful for her hospitality in Standerwick and Duirinish and for her support to him in all his ploys and journeyings. It was a great partnership.

Did Torquhil have any faults? Serena and the girls could tell maybe. If he had any, they were loveable faults.

I have my own very vivid memory that I cherish. After Bella's wedding a tiny group of us, Dr Farquhar who is now gone, and Mary and Nettie and I, stayed overnight in Standerwick. On Sunday morning he told us that there was no service that day in the Parish Church. "We'll have our own service at home", he said. So we sat around, and sang a Psalm and read the Scriptures, and offered our prayers. I can still see him, the Bible on his knee, relaxed in his lovely home, reverent in God's Presence. The perfect "pater familias", father in his own family and in the worldwide family of his name. A dear and loveable man. We mourn his death sorely. And we thank God for him. Now, in our last duty to him, we go to lay his ashes in the consecrated ground where so many of his forebears lie.

HISTORY OF THE MATHESONS

In the last Newsletter, Torquhil wrote about the History of the Mathesons 1900 and the enormous amount of work he had done on up-dating and revising it. It is intended that this will still be published, some of it quite soon. The branches that he had virtually completed should be no great problem. There are some others, though, that will be hard to complete without his great reservoir of knowledge. Please continue to send any new genealogical information to Standerwick. If the History can be produced in sections, it may be possible to have news of further progress for the next Clan Newsletter.

INTRODUCING THE CHIEF

Major Sir Fergus John Matheson of Matheson, 7th Baronet of Lochalsh, Chief of Clan Matheson.

Born 1927, younger son of General Sir Torquhil George Matheson, 5th Baronet, KCB, CMG. Educated at Eton.

Married the Hon. Jean Willoughby, 1952, younger daughter of 11th Baron Middleton, KG, MC. Children are: Matilda (1953) married to Martin Thompson, Alexander (1954) married to Katharine Oswald and Fiona (1962) married to Andrew Kendall. There are 8 grandchildren.

Military Service - enlisted into Coldstream Guards 1944; commissioned from 161 (RMC) Mons OCTU 1945; served in 1st & 3rd Battalions Germany, Palestine & North Africa. Retired as Major in 1964.

Civil employment with Daniel Greenaway, Printers; Ross Group; self employed from 1974.

One of H.M. Body Guard of the Honorable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms since 1979. Appointed Standard Bearer 1993. President St John Ambulance in Norfolk since 1993.



The Chief

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

NOVA SCOTIA MAINLAND.

Hon Sec: Mrs Beverley Matheson,
88 Beaumont Drive, Lower Sackville, N.S. B4C 1V6.

Last Christmas there was some very worrying news about Ena. She had to have an operation and Beverly very kindly took over as secretary at short notice. Since then there have been some good reports of her progress and we do send her every possible good wish.

NOVA SCOTIA MEMORIAL SERVICE

from Beverley Matheson

Last Sunday, May 16th, fifty or more of our clan and friends gathered at the little Presbyterian Church in the Rocklin countryside. It was a beautiful spring day in Pictou County and Glen Matheson (now Reverend Doctor) led a beautiful service. He has the gift of saying just the right thing!

CAPE BRETON.

Hon Sec: Brenda Matheson Cochrane,
56 Birch Street, Port Merien, N.S. B0A 1T0.

On May 16th a Memorial Service for the Chief was held at the Anglican Church of St Peter & St Paul in Baddeck, taken by the Rev. Ron Cutler. The address was given by Rev. D. Faversham Arnold. It was a lovely day and there was a good crowd at the Service.

UNITED STATES.

Hon Sec: Lyman W. Matheson,
12126 Rhett Drive, Houston, Texas, 77024.

Congratulations to Robert Matheson, California, on being awarded a Department of Defence Joint Unit Commendation for Operation Desert Shield/Storm for his unit's part in the Gulf War.

AUSTRALIA.

Frank and Mona Matheson ask Australian members to contact them about the formation of an Australian branch. They also ask New Zealand and Nova Scotian Mathesons to write to them giving support and to offer ideas about gatherings etc. They would love to welcome anyone visiting Queensland at any time. Their address is: 14 Carlton Street, Port Vernon, Queensland 4655; tel: 28 15 89.

Jeff Matheson wrote a long and most interesting letter about life in Australia. He has now more or less retired and has stopped being an Army reservist. Instead he has launched out in a new career as a beekeeper. His honey is delicious and he is sure to make a great success of it. He has two good Matheson boys, Allan and Ewan, both excellent musicians.



right - Jeff & Gail Matheson with their sons Allan & Ewan

NEW ZEALAND.

Hon Sec: Mrs Gordon (Ailsa) Matheson,
138A Pembroke Street, Hamilton.

On 9th May, the Invercargill group had a special afternoon at the main church - a short service of thanksgiving for Sir Torquhil's life was taken by Rev. Alan Matheson and Rev. Blair Rodgers (his wife a Matheson). "Rev Alan presented a well researched tribute to Sir Torquhil", says Lorna Rodgers and continues "he pictured for us a man large of heart and humility, a farmer, a people person and sensitive to others who valued accuracy and endeavoured to live by the motto of 'Do and Hope'. To conclude we offered prayers for Lady Serena and those near to her - also we prayed for Mary Webb of Balclutha, one of our members, whose husband died at Easter. We adjourned from this peaceful time of reflection to Central Hall for afternoon tea, to the piped strains of 'Amazing Grace'."

John Kidd has had his hip operation and we send all our best wishes for its success and his speedy recovery.

Following on a fruitful correspondence with Monica Kidd and then with Ailsa, New Zealand family have been found for Alex and Donna Mathieson of Fort Collins, Co., USA. In the way of so many migrating Highland families, some members went to the States and some to New Zealand. Alex and Donna are hoping to visit New Zealand in February 1994 and to establish contact with family, especially those at Dunedin (Tomahawk), Christchurch and Tauranga.

OBITUARIES.

We regret to announce the following deaths, and express our sincere sympathy to their relatives:

- Mr Ian Martin Matheson of Corby, Northants on 23rd March, 1992, husband of Mrs Alice Matheson.
- Norman Matheson of Cape Breton on 29th August, 1992, husband of Mayme Matheson.
- Ernest Matheson of Glengarry, Pictou County, Nova Scotia on 23rd February, 1993, husband of the late Margaret Matheson and father of Al Matheson. He was a charter member of the Nova Scotian Branch.
- W.W. (Duck) Wannamaker Jr., of Orangeburg, South Carolina on 3rd March, 1993 aged 92. A prominent engineer who specialised in bridge construction, he was the great grandson of Donald Matheson of Charleston, brother of Sir Alexander Matheson, 1st Baronet of Lochalsh.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FLOODS IN THE MID WEST

part of a letter from Jean Matheson Fries

written on 23rd August, 1993.

The flood waters are finally receding but the weather people say that it won't be back to normal river height until the middle of September at the earliest. The peak water level was 49½ feet above flood level - anything above 30 feet is above flood level. The last I heard it has gone down to 39½. People are finally being allowed back in their homes and it is devastating for them. The destruction is unbelievable - the furnishings are ruined - there is mud and 'gook' several inches thick on the floors and the stench is almost unbearable. Floors and walls are ruined and some homes can never be lived in again. I feel so sorry for those people - most of them had no flood insurance.

School will be starting again in a few weeks and the schools don't know where most of their students are now - some are in other areas living with relatives and others are living in motels, etc. Some of the school buildings cannot be used, so some schools will be held in buildings loaned to them temporarily and some have set up some temporary buildings but I do wonder how that will work out when the cold weather comes. It would be best if children could attend their old schools, so that they would at least have some feeling of security by being with their friends and the school which they know, since so many have lost the only home they have ever known.

I think I mentioned to you about the 51 propane gas tanks which presented a tremendous emergency - each tank held 32,000 gallons and the authorities were afraid the pipes would break and cause a huge cloud in the atmosphere which could turn into a huge fire-ball should it come into contact with a spark. The Police evacuated 12,000 people from their homes, giving them five minutes to leave - the homes were within a square mile area near the tanks. All electricity and gas was shut off in those homes and the people lived in shelters or with friends or relatives for five days. People left so hurriedly that they had to leave their pets behind and, as time went on, they became very anxious about them. The police set up an arrangement whereby the people would have to apply, presenting evidence that they

were in fact the occupants of the house to prevent looters, and then a policeman would accompany them. One man was taken to his house and while groping around in the dark,



Jean Matheson Fries

he heard a voice say, "Hello there!" It was his parrot! Children were especially happy to get their pets back.

People have come from all parts of the U.S. to offer their services, especially in filling sandbags - it was very heartening to see the wonderful outpouring of assistance. Now the authorities and the people living in those areas are wondering how the sandbags can be disposed of. St Louis city has offered to put huge dumpsters in each neighborhood where people can bring their carpeting, mattresses, furniture etc. and just about anything which can no longer be used and the city will haul it away free of charge.

NEW MEMBERS.

Welcome to the following new members of the Society:

- Dr Iain Matheson, Dashatgate, The Hill, Millom, Cumbria. Iain is a member of the Donald of Balmacara Branch in HOM 1900.
- J.J. Matthijsse, Laurillardlaan 11, 2082 HE Sandpoortzuid, The Netherlands. He is a first cousin of Huibert Cornelius Matthijsse.
- Mrs Judith L. Tottle, 32 Raby Esplanade, Ormiston, Queensland 4160, Australia.
- Colin David Lewis, 20 Crofton Crt, Hoppers Crossing, Victoria 3029, Australia. He is a nephew of Mrs G. Matheson, Croydon, Victoria and Mrs Jean Robertson, Bendigo, Victoria.
- Jeremy J. Matheson, Colton Manor House, Norwich Road, Colton, Norwich.
- William R.A. Matheson, 9 The Willows, Rustington, West Sussex.

CORRECTIONS TO 1992 ADDRESS LIST.

- Miss Isabel Matheson, Flat 6, Northgate House, Barleyfield Lane, Wetherby, West Yorks, LS22 4PJ.
- Mrs Ian M.Matheson, 20 Richmond Road, Corby, Northants, NN17 1TG.
- Richard J.Matheson, 18 Perryn Court, Grimwood Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 1BA.

LOST MEMBERS

Newsletter 47 returned - can anyone help?

- Mr William H.Matheson, 28 Rue de Berri, Paris 8, France.
- Mr Alexander R.Matheson, P.O.Box 104, Isando, Transvaal, 1600, South Africa.
- Mrs B.E.Smith, R.S.D. Drinkwater Road, Maiden Gulley, Victoria, 3539, Australia.

THE POTHEAD SCANDAL

by Glen Matheson , Nova Scotia.

The first Matheson of repute or disrepute in Sutherland was an Ivor Macmhathain of Shiness. He flourished at the time of the great battle of Drumnacoub near Tongue deep in Clan MacKay country.

As background, this was a battle between the MacKays and the Murray/Sutherland alliance in 1433. Angus Murray of Dornoch wished to rid the country of a certain MacKay. To do so he hired two young MacKays, nephews of the MacKay chief. They captured the MacKay rebel for which Angus Murray gave them each one of his daughters and the promise to invade Strathnaver to obtain the MacKay lands for their possession.

The Murrays, with the assistance of Sutherland's vassals, invaded Strathnaver but lost a bloody battle on the slopes of Drumnacoub.

Meanwhile in Shiness there lived an Ivor MacMhathain, a chieftain of that branch of the clan. He initially chose not to go to battle, supposedly because he thought its purpose foolish or because his family were new to the politics of the region.

However his wife, probably a Murray or a Sutherland, begged to differ. Besides being partial to Murrays, the great historians thought of her as a hag.

The morning after their countrymen set out to battle, Mrs MacMhathain served her husband beadh fir an diaigh feach, food of the cowards, a sort of pothead also known contemptuously known as 'army reject'. When asked why he was being fed this strange dish, she replied it was a proper meal for a proper coward. Matheson, like generations of his male descendants, begrudgingly gave in to his wife and went to Drumnacoub to fight with the heroes.

Arriving late, he found the battle over and his countrymen being chased home by the MacKays. The elderly Chief of MacKay was hobbling about the field taking inventory of the dead. Ivor shot the Chief with his arrow and fled with all speed. Despite his escape, it was known that he was the assassin of the Chief and the MacKays sought revenge. Ivor was unable to return to his home and supposedly hid in the hills for months thereafter. Eventually the Chief's grandson found him crossing a stream. Needless to say he was beheaded on the spot and his head was placed on a hill near Tongue, known as Cnocan en Cann, hill of the head.

It is noted by the MacKay historians that no Matheson of spirit would attempt to eat pottage again.

JOHN OF FERNAIG AND HIS DREAM

by Serena Matheson

Another piece of family history for the next generation.

John was born at Fernaig in 1696. His grandmother was there, and when she held him in her arms, she burst into tears and said that there would never be another Matheson as important or successful as he would be, or more respected.

He was a clever boy and was sent to the Academy at Fortrose on the Black Isle. It seemed a long way from home, but he did really well.

One holidays, just before he left school, he had an extraordinary dream. There were three beautiful girls up in a tree sitting on separate branches that came out of the same trunk. Then, there they all were, sitting at his father's fireside, two of them fell over, and one stood up. Next morning he went to the byre to see the old man who worked there as he had a great reputation as a seer and could interpret dreams. The bodach told John that the three girls all came from the same clan, and that he would marry them all in turn. Two of them would die before him and the third would outlive him.

When he got back to school he found three very pretty girls there, all called MacKenzie, but from different families. They were Annabella MacKenzie of Achilty, Margaret MacKenzie of Balmaduthy and Elizabeth MacKenzie of Allangrange. He thought they were all marvellous, and flirted with each in turn, and even talked about marrying them!

John came home to Fernaig when he left school, but then a very sad thing happened. His father, Farquhar, was a very important person who had made a lot of money dealing in cattle, and there was no one whose opinion Lord Seaforth valued more. One day he was asked to come to Brahan very urgently to give his advice on a boundary dispute. Farquhar set off at once, and walked as fast as he could even though it was a very hot day, and he got quite exhausted. He stopped for a long drink of water from a well, Tobair Degain, in the pass of Strath Conan. The water was icy cold, and it gave him such a shock that he died. He was still quite a young man.

Lord Seaforth thought a lot of young John too, and made him his factor in Lochalsh straight away. He fulfilled this trust completely and carried out his duties very fairly. He also made quite a lot of money grazing cattle in Skye and droving them to the southern markets. But John thought a lot about Annabella and Margaret and Elizabeth, too. Most

of all he thought about Annabella.

Now Annabella's grandfather was a famous poet called Murdoch MacKenzie of Achilty (which had been bought for them by the Marquis of Breadalbain, his father-in-law). He was living in the Island of Lewis at this time and Annabella and her mother were with him. There was a very eligible young man there, and Murdoch thought she should marry him. But Annabella had fallen in love with John Matheson of Fernaig when she had met him in Fortrose, so she was very unhappy about this and she managed to get off an urgent letter to John.

John was certainly not a person to let things slide. When he got Annabella's letter, he contacted twelve of his friends and asked them to come on a journey with him in their best highland dress. Among them were the Rev. Alexander MacLennan the young minister, MacCrimmon the piper from Glenelg and Murdoch Matheson, Seaforth's bard. They all set off at once in a long rowing boat called a birlinn for Stornaway in the Isle of Lewis. It was very rough that day, as it often is in the Minch, and poor Murdoch the bard was very sea-sick. He was so ill that they had to land him on the Island of Crowlin and then pushed on as fast as they could. But the weather got worse and the wind blew up against them and they had to waste two days sheltering in Skye.

Meanwhile Murdoch felt better as soon as he got onto dry land and he even composed a beautiful song for the occasion. He managed to get a boat across to Gairloch where he caught the packet for Stornaway and arrived there before John and the others. To their astonishment, there he was on the quay to meet them! They sent someone off at once with a message to Annabella's house, and made themselves look as smart as possible. Then they set off with MacCrimmon the piper leading the procession.

Annabella was very excited when she got their message. She went to the parlour window to watch for them with her mother, who had never met John. When they came in sight, she asked Annabella which one he was. Annabella pointed out John and her mother said "I do not wonder at you at all, to be in love with such a handsome gentleman!"

After they had arrived and had had a meal, Mr MacKenzie said that he would give a party for John and his friends and the rival suitor from Lewis. He said that they were both such gallant young gentlemen that he could not decide who should claim Annabella, so whoever could get hold of a Minister first should marry her. I expect he thought the Lewisman would have the advantage! But Alexander MacLennan had gone next door to change, and he came back dressed as a Minister. There he was, on the spot, to perform the Ceremony.

Everybody was very happy and they had a wonderful wedding and danced and feasted for three days. Then they just waited for a favourable wind and set off back to Fernaig where I am sure they had another party!



"..... in their best highland dress."

CLAN MATHESON SOCIETY. (U.K.)

Balance Sheet as at 30 June, 1993.

ASSETS

Balance at Bank		£367.62	
Deposit with Abbey			
National Bldg Soc.		<u>718.13</u>	<u>£1085.75</u>
Represented by:-			
Reserve Fund - Life Members Subscriptions:-			
Total as at 30 June 1992			£880.00
Received during year	£120.00		
Transfer to Ordinary A/C	120.00		
Surplus as at 30 June 1992		£250.35	
Deficit as at 30 June 1993		44.60	
Surplus as per Balance Sheet		<u>205.75</u>	<u>£1085.75</u>

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Annual Members Subscriptions	£ 16.00		
Life Members Subscriptions	120.00		
U.S. Contribution to Newsletter	22.50		
N.Z. Contribution to Newsletter	22.50		
Sale of Newsletters	1.18		
Donations	58.07		
Building Society Interest	<u>14.96</u>	£255.21	

LESS:-

Cost of Printing Newsletters	£230.00		
Postage & Stationery	<u>69.81</u>	<u>£299.81</u>	
Deficit for year to 30 June 1993		<u>£ 44.60</u>	

N.J. Matheson
Hon. Treas.

HOW TO JOIN THE SOCIETY

Membership of the Society is restricted to persons spelling their name Matheson or Mathieson or whose parents or one of their grandparents spelled their name similarly. Persons who spell their name Matheison, Mathison or Matthewson will be considered for membership if they can establish the Highland origin of their family.

For members living in the UK or overseas (excluding North America and New Zealand), the annual subscription is £2 or £15 for life membership; applications for membership should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer at Dunkeld with the appropriate sterling cheque.

Applications for membership from persons living in New Zealand, Canada or the USA should be made to the Hon. Secretary in the country in which they live. The subscription rates are \$7.50 for annual membership and \$75 for life membership in the currencies concerned.

Annual subscriptions will become due on the first of January each year, but members joining after 30 June in any year will not become liable for a further subscription until the end of the following year.

Any person whose annual subscription is eighteen months in arrears will be deemed to have resigned from the Society. If he or she wishes to rejoin, application for membership will have to be made afresh.

**NEWS, INFORMATION, PHOTOGRAPHS FOR
NEXT NEWSLETTER TO EDITOR BY
1 SEPTEMBER 1994.**

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(Members are invited to send their family histories to
Janet with any queries they may have.)

PRINTED PAPER RATE

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