

Clan Matheson International Newsletter 2023



Contents

Message from the Chief	1
Report from Australia (Colin Matheson)	2
Report from Canada (Chuck Matheson)	6
Genealogy Corner (John Faid)	9
Report from New Zealand (Andrew Matheson)	11
Report from UK and Europe (Andrew Matheson)	13
Report from USA (Colvin Matheson)	16



Welcome to our annual newsletter!

2022 seems to have flashed by. The major event last summer was The Queen's Platinum Jubilee to celebrate 70 years of singular service to so many countries. It was overtaken, but by no means overshadowed, by news of her death on 8 September. We were on the Isle of Skye at the time and made our way quickly to London as I was due to take part in her funeral. What a momentous ten days they were, bringing out a vast range of emotions and memories around the world. And what a shining example Her Majesty set for us all.

My eyes are now firmly on our next Clan Gathering in Scotland. It will take place Saturday 20th – Tuesday 23rd July 2024 and I fervently hope that many members of our Clan Society will attend with their families and supporters. Because of the Covid pandemic, this will be our first gathering in Scotland since we took part in the Edinburgh Tattoo in 2017. The outline plan at this stage is to have the first two days (20 & 21 July) in Lochalsh, to include the Lochcarron Highland Games at Attadale on 20 July, and the second two days (22 & 23 July) on the Isle of Skye. Perhaps you will want to tie this trip in with Olympic Games in Paris (Fri 26 Jul– Sun 11 Aug) or the Edinburgh Tattoo (reportedly 4-23 Aug). As the programme develops, I shall keep the Chief's Lieutenants informed.

My sincere thanks go to all those of you who give their time to make our Society function. It could hardly exist otherwise. I know full well that you have many interests and that the Clan is but one of them, and I am truly grateful for your efforts.

I close with a request that you do your best to interest the younger generations in their Highland heritage, and perhaps bring as many of them as possible to next summer's Gathering in Lochalsh and Skye.

Best wishes to you all.

Alexander

Lieutenant Colonel Sir Alexander Matheson of Matheson, Bt. LVO DL 28th Chief

Life in Australia is often far removed from the turmoils in other parts of the world. We are, after all, the antipodes – the “country or region on the opposite side of the earth”, about 10,000 miles from Scotland. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected us as cruelly as everyone else on the planet and our economy is as badly affected by the war in Ukraine as other western countries. As have other countries, there are many fewer fatalities from the pandemic. But it would be fair to say that after a slow start, we now have a well-established vaccination program and fatalities from the pandemic are much less. People in general, Mathesons included, are less apprehensive of Covid-19 and so vaccination takeup has dropped off in recent months.

Australia is a federation of States in which some government decisions are made by State governments and some by the Federal (Commonwealth) government. Health is a State matter and so the response to Covid-19 has mostly been a State matter, other than the acquisition of vaccines from overseas by the Commonwealth. Victoria had the most lockdowns and restrictions and Western Australia the least, the latter benefitting from its relative isolation from the other States. State restrictions prevented the Clan Society here from conducting our normal activities; Highland Gatherings were cancelled and our meetings could not be held in person. As did many other organisations, we resorted to the internet (Zoom) for our meetings and get-togethers. This inevitably led to a drop-off in attendance as many were intimidated by the technology. But at least we could continue in some form.

Last year we were able to attend the Melbourne Highland Games, renamed from the Ringwood Highland Games and moved from Ringwood in Melbourne to the nearby suburb of Croydon. The hiatus in the Games and the relocation of venue meant that the organisation left quite a bit to be desired. However, we recruited two new members – both of whom live nearby the new venue. New member Sheena Wright told us her mother had died recently but would have been thrilled to see our tent at the Gathering.



L-R Sheena Wright, Mary Molan, Margaret Fleming & Warren Matheson



Mary Molan (in ancient red Matheson skirt), Sheena Wright (in red top) and Warren Matheson in the Parade of the Clans at the Melbourne Highland Gathering.



Matheson tent sandwiched between the Buchanans and the McGillivrays at the Melbourne Highland Games.

We were able to hold our annual Clan Picnic in the City of Melbourne in February 2023, the first annual picnic since before the pandemic. This time the weather was perfect warm sunshine, not too hot and not too cold or windy. Warren entertained us with his piping of “The March of The Mathesons”.



Pictured left L-R Janet Blainey (and Poppy), Warren Matheson (piping) and Ruth Pearce at the Annual Clan Matheson Picnic.



Pictured above Euan McGillivray, Helen & Rob Mathieson, Margaret Fleming, (Poppy) Janet Blainey, Ruth Pearce (obscured) & Colin Matheson at the Annual Clan Picnic.

Brad Matheson wrote an article for our Australian Newsletter (available on our website clanmatheson.com.au) about the voyage to Port Phillip (now Melbourne) of one of his ancestors in the 19th century. His ancestor was a part of a notorious voyage from Liverpool in 1852. The ship was a square-rigged clipper, the Ticonderoga, equipped with two decks to accommodate 814 passengers. Her Captain was one of the first to travel by the Great Circle Route, avoiding the Cape Colony in South Africa to shorten the voyage. After 90 days at sea, 86 of the passengers had died of disease and up to 6 weeks after being put into quarantine after arrival, a further 82 died. A Janet Matheson and her son George were among those who perished at sea. Fortunately for his great-great-grandson Brad, John Matheson survived the voyage and its grisly aftermath and raised his family in Victoria. The quarantine facilities, such as they were, had been set up in response to the ship's arrival about 80 km from the Melbourne settlement. The settlement was only about 20 years old with a population of only about 75,000 and so the arrival of hundreds of sick and dying passengers must have been something of a shock. It is possible that some of the passengers were trying to get to the Victorian goldfields as the Victorian Gold Rush had just begun. The population of the Melbourne area rose to over 500,000 only ten years later.

Roma Jorgenson also wrote about the voyage of her ancestor in a steam-augmented barquentine sailing ship twenty years later in 1873. The ship, the SS Atrato, left from Plymouth three times – once before she stripped the blades from her propeller off Cornwall and turned back, the second before she broke a drive shaft six days out and turned back, and the third was a successful departure. Luckily they had the sails to fall back on when steam power was not available. Times were uncertain!



Collins St Melbourne in 1839 (watercolour by W Kniaht)

Migration of Scots to Australia began in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney, beginning the displacement of local aboriginal people. Larger-scale migrations took place in the 19th century, particularly in response to the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria. In the telling of Family Histories back from the present day we can often go no further back than the fact of migration. We might know the ship upon which our ancestors voyaged, the ports from which they embarked and disembarked as well as some dates. There are good records available online of passenger lists from ships landing in Australian ports that are sometimes helpful. Records of the later activities of families can frequently be found and histories written. But the stories of what happened before they embarked and where they lived (in Scotland or elsewhere) as well as who their ancestors were is often extremely difficult to establish. This is because people were frequently already removed from their Scottish origins before embarking and ancestors prior to the migrants frequently unknown to the present day. We are no different from other migrant peoples in wanting to know whence we came – hence the demand for access to Scottish church and statutory records and other sources of historical information. DNA

analysis is now becoming an essential tool for discovering who we are, but linking DNA evidence of descent with documentary evidence can be a challenge.

Australian Mathesons join me in wishing Mathesons all over the world a happy and safe 2023.

Colin Matheson

Chief's Lieutenant and President of Clan Matheson Australia

Greetings from Canada!

For this year's Canadian contribution I inspired Duncan Matheson, eldest Son of the late (Hon.) John Ross Matheson to write an article about his father John Ross Matheson.

John Ross Matheson

(1917 – 2013)

Readers may be familiar with the CBC's "Canadian Heritage Minute" which depicts John Matheson as a spark, resource, and mediating influence in the creation of Canada's Flag. Less well known are his involvements as a founder of the Heraldry Society of Canada, in the design of the Order of Canada, and in the creation of a tartan for his alma mater, Queen's University of Kingston Ontario. These interests derived from family roots in Glengarry County, a Scottish settlement of the 1840s (bordering Ontario and Quebec), and our ancestry on the Isle of Skye.

Alexander Matheson, John Ross's great-grandfather, received a patent for 100 acres of white pine forest on Skye Road in Kenyon Township, near the village of Dunvegan. Alexander's eldest son, John, was able to study theology at McGill University and became ordained in the Presbyterian Church, serving charges throughout Glengarry County in English and Gaelic. His eldest son, Alexander Dawson, also chose the ministry and from 1922-45 his parish was Chalmers-Wesley United Church in Quebec City. This is where my father John Ross grew up, during the Great Depression, which influenced his decision to study economics at Queen's.

Upon graduation, in 1940, he joined the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, and served until 1944 as a Forward Observation Officer. Severely wounded at Ortona, Italy, he was hospitalized and returned home. While at a veteran's Hospital in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, PQ, John Ross met Edith Bickley, whom he "actively and unabashedly courted" while still in a wheelchair. They married a year later. Never recovering the full use of his legs, Dad gradually learned to walk with braces and canes. On a veteran's pension, he managed to attend Osgoode Hall, in Toronto, and set up a law practice in Brockville Ontario, where our parents raised six children, Duncan, Wendy, Jill, Donald, Roderick and Murdoch.



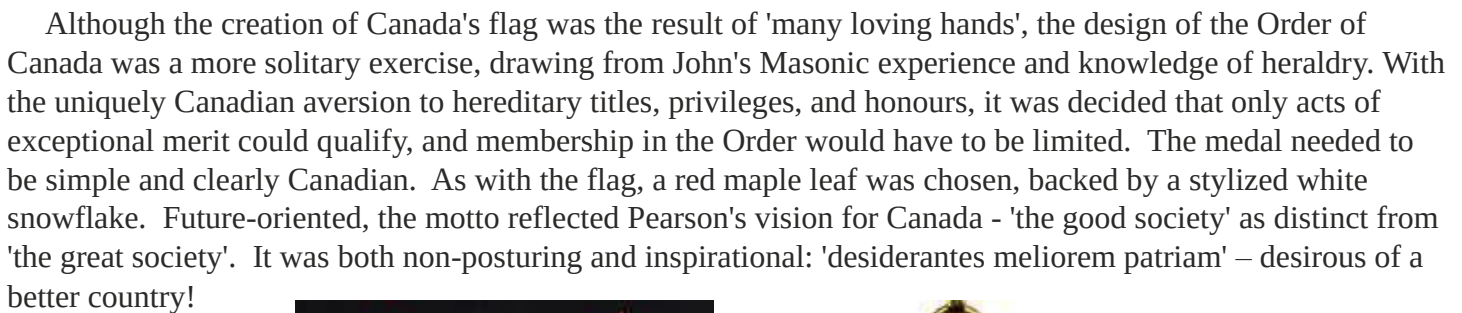
John Ross Circa 1941



The Happy Couple on their Wedding Day

During WWII, Dad's free time was spent exploring family origins in the UK. As a practicing Mason, Dad would visit British lodges and churches, where he began a lifelong journey of discovering the meaning and use of symbols. His fascination with heraldry grew over time and eventually led to petitions for grants of Arms for his father (then Principal of Emanuel College, Victoria University, U of Toronto.), distinguished friends and acquaintances, the City of Brockville and the Heraldry Society of Canada.

The Quebec separation movement gathered steam in the '60s, and Pearson, looking for ways to heal the language and cultural divide, promised a new flag to replace the "Red Ensign" - a British merchant marine flag with the Canadian shield on its fly. The mixed public response led to the creation of a multi-party Flag Committee in which Dad, Pearson's Parliamentary Secretary, was able to play a role instrumental to the final decision. The full story can be found in his book: *Canada's Flag: A search for a country*. 1986. Belleville, ON. Mika Publishing. [also, Boston, Mass. G. K. Hall, c1980: CR115.C2 M37].



See [Companion of the Order of Canada \(CC\) - Canada.ca](#) for further information

Following politics, Dad returned to his law practice and was named to the bench in the Judicial Districts of Ottawa-Carleton (1968) and Lanark (1978), finally retiring from the Ontario Court of Justice in 1992. His most notable case, and source of great satisfaction, was that of Justin Clark, a

young resident of Rideau Regional Centre - who wanted to leave the institution for those with severe mental and physical disabilities, a common place for parents to deposit their physically challenged children. Although his communication was limited to Blissymbolics, Justin convinced the judge (Dad) that he had the mental acuity and competence to manage his life – with support – outside the institution. (It may have been providential that his judge had suffered a head wound during the war, and upon waking from a coma, had to relearn how to communicate, and walk with support.) The case became a landmark in human rights law for those living with disabilities. Once again, John Ross was a visionary who changed lives for the better in a non-postering and inspirational way!

[See the Decision <https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Justin-Gives-to-Us-All.pdf>] Rockville Ontario, where our parents raised six children, Duncan, Wendy, Jill, Donald, Roderick and Murdoch.

Chuck Matheson

Chief's Lieutenant for Canada

GENEALOGY CORNER

Over the years articles in Genealogy Corner have seldom addressed Clan links with continental Europe. This article explores Matheson links with the Flemings who started to settle in Scotland in the 11th and 12th centuries, and the Flemings' chivalrous heritage which has so enriched Scottish culture over the centuries. Fleming warriors had taken part in William of Normandy's invasion of England, mainly under Count Eustace of Boulogne. Many settled in England but, as a result of the subsequent civil wars between Stephen of Blois and the Empress Matilda, many then departed for Scotland where they provided a growing share of military and political support for the nascent Scottish monarchy.

A re-examination of a recent article in Genealogy Corner suggests that a Fleming may well have played a crucial part in the founding of Clan Matheson. That article drew on ancient Matheson tradition, heraldic evidence and records of a ship being built in Inverness for the Count of St Pol in 1248. With that material the article offered an account of a 13th century Matheson Chief's son sailing from Scotland to join King Louis IX of France – the later St Louis - on Crusade to the Holy Land. Consistent with tradition, the heir returns, a rich man, to build Eilean Donnan Castle hard by his father's house at Totaig, at the confluence of the great sea lochs of Loch Alsh, Loch Long and Loch Duich.

This first Fleming connection to be mentioned turns out to be that same Count of St Pol of the Boulonnais in Flanders. According to Beryl Platts, the pioneer British historian of early Flanders, the count was the Chatillon successor of the Counts of St Pol of the Commines family, the same family which emerged in Scotland as the Comyns, later opponents of the Bruce claims to the Scottish throne. It was the Comyn blood of William II, Earl of Ross, and the continuing loyalty of the Mathesons to the Earls of Ross that explains much in the tangled web of Mackenzie and Matheson rivalries, and the eclipse of Clan Matheson by Clan Mackenzie in the mid 15th century.

The early history of the Mathesons in Sutherland is more obscure than that of their Lochalsh cousins but close relations with another Flemish descended family, the Earls of Sutherland, appear to have been established by 1381, when that support was undoubtedly essential to the appointment of Alexander Man (MacMhathain) as Bishop of Caithness with his seat at Dornoch, Sutherland. That closeness is beyond doubt two generations later when Iomhair MacMhathain is recorded as laird of Shinness on the northern shore of Loch Shin (and possibly an occupier of a crannog in the loch), and vassal of the Earl of Sutherland. The forbear of these Sutherland Earls was Freskin the Fleming who settled initially in the Lowlands in the late 11th or early 12th century before moving north where he or descendants improved, and settled on, the marshy lands of Moray and built the fortress of Duffus. As the principal agent of royal power on the Scottish northern frontier the Sutherlands led the conquest of the southern part of the Earldom of Caithness, thenceforward "Sutherland", of which they became Lords and, later, Earls. The Murrays of Aberscross of the same lineage were the chief vassals and military support of the Earls for centuries and became powerful enough to be treated by the royal government as a separate Clan. Tradition records that it was Iomhair Mac Mhathain's Murray wife who in 1438 goaded him to travel, too late, to the battlefield of Drum na Coub where a Murray chieftain had led the Sutherland forces against Clan Mackay.

The judicial exclusion of the male lines of the old Earls of Sutherland in favour of the 8th Earl's daughter, Elizabeth, married to Adam Gordon, brought to subsequent Earls and descendants another historic Flemish blood line, that of the Setons, through two earlier female descents. We shall treat of them and their Flemish compatriots shortly. Here we may note that despite early tensions with the new Gordon regime Shinness Mathesons relations with the Gordons had clearly improved by the early 1600s when Sir Robert Gordon set up John Matheson of Shinness as Chief of the Siol Wohan, i.e. Mhathain; (and by the use of "Siol" acknowledged them as a true Sept of Clan Matheson). And it is some testimony to such good relations that the Gordon Christian names "George" and "Robert" became so widespread amongst the Sutherland Mathesons from John Matheson's probable son, Colonel George Matheson of Shinness, down to the present day.

And why - I hear you ask - should we even be interested in remembering connections with Fleming families such as these, together with others such as the Douglasses and (arguably) the Bruces? The answer is that, as we shall see, the Flemings possessed a distinct and rich cultural heritage deserving to be explored, despite that heritage being much ignored or belittled over the years. Some modern historians, through ignorance, have treated Flemings as mere adjuncts of their westerly neighbours, the Normans. And, from William of Malmesbury (12C) onwards the Flemings were written down by many chroniclers in England as

adventurers and even mercenaries in contrast to the noble and chivalrous Normans, whereas in fact the reverse was the case.

The Normans were a people who emerged from their rough and ready Viking inheritance late, about the 10th century. By contrast the Flemings had a civilised culture going back to the late 8th century and the court of Charlemagne and his spiritual and political guide and adviser, the great Alcuin of York. In the elaborate detail of the

Exhortation of Charlemagne of 800 AD, and other documents the emperor enjoined high moral precepts and ideals of service on the nobility and those in authority; this included service to the Church and service to the poor and afflicted. And all this within a code and structure infused with religious devotion.

Crucially, in her two volumes *Scottish Hazard: the Flemish Nobility and their impact on Scotland* (publ. 1985, 1990) Beryl Platts offers convincing evidence of the richness of the Flemish heritage through original research and scrutiny of the close heraldic links between Scottish settled Flemings and their kin in medieval Flanders; and in so doing shows that the Flemings played an early role in developing the art and science of heraldry. There is much detail in her work to debate but her research makes a strong case for many leading non Gaelic Scottish families having ancestral origins in the families of the Carolingian Court. Remarkably, in the case of the Setons, the line is traced to Charlemagne himself through his leading heirs the Counts of Boulogne.

We should celebrate today the longevity and resilience of the ancient Flemish legacy of blood and heraldry which is very much around us in Scotland today in both private and public domains, and in families who continue to lead and serve in public life.

John Faid

Clan Genealogist

Clan Matheson New Zealand

New structure and legal basis

The major piece of news from New Zealand is that we have established the new legal structure for the branch described in the previous international newsletter. Clan Matheson New Zealand is now a legal entity rather than an unincorporated society, and a registered charity.

It has been a long road getting to this point. First there was an important period of reflection, discussion with branch members and the Chief, and consideration by the committee of the best foundation for the future of Clan Matheson in New Zealand. We were concerned that a subscription-based membership that was gradually decreasing in numbers and increasing in age was not a sustainable basis for the future.

We are proud of the information we hold and share and wanted to make this available to a wider range of people, especially the increasing number of people who might not see joining an organisation as necessary for communicating and exchanging information. Our website and Facebook group were open to all and activity on those sites indicated wider interest, but our newsletter was not available to all.

We wanted to establish the branch as a legal entity and gain recognition as a charitable organisation, for future certainty and as a foundation for future fund-raising.

In 2021 we moved away from a subscription basis, as explained in last year's international newsletter. In 2022 we focussed on forming a legal entity (a charitable trust board), having it recognised as a registered charity and granted tax-exempt status. For legal reasons these are distinct steps involving three separate government departments, and it took until January 2023 for them all to be completed.

This means that New Zealand branch of the Clan Matheson Society, or Clan Matheson New Zealand, is a legal entity that is recognised as fulfilling charitable purposes. It also has tax relief status: it doesn't have to pay tax, and donors get a tax refund on donations.

Three trustees hold responsibility for governance and leadership of this new entity, and a committee of six manages the activities of the clan.

Clan gatherings

After the 2021–22 season was pretty much disrupted by covid restrictions, this summer is back to normal. Gatherings started with the Hororata Highland Games in November and continued with the Waipu Highland Games on 1 January 2023 and Paeroa Highland Games on 11 February. Clan Matheson was represented as usual, and our tent was a place for people interested in their Matheson connections and the focus of discussions on the branch and future activities.



New Zealand branch chair Lena Orum with her partner Dale Bailey, president of Clan Cameron New Zealand, at the Waipu Highland



Committee member Rodger Matheson at the Hororata Highland Games

Communication channels

Since making our branch newsletter available to anyone who is interested, it is now being emailed to 90% more people than when it was available only on subscription. More people are downloading it from our website.

In the newsletter we have a series of articles on family history research, and another on engaging younger people in exploring their family stories. We also carry stories for those interested in the heritage of New Zealand Mathesons and news about the activities of Mathesons in New Zealand. The newsletter also reports on clan member activities, especially attendance at Highland games and interclan activities.

Our website is open to anyone interested. Our Facebook group is also open to all, and highlights any New Zealand Matheson activity found by an automated Google search.

What we're doing now

The trustees and branch committee are now working together to make the most of the opportunities created by our new structure and status, and will soon hold a planning session with a 1, 3 and 5 year horizon. We need to think particularly about gatherings and meetings. We continue with regular committee meetings by videoconference and wider connections through the website, newsletter and Facebook group.

Andrew Matheson

Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand

The New Zealand branch website:

www.clanmatheson.org.nz Our newsletters:

www.clanmatheson.org.nz/newsletters

The New Zealand Clan Matheson Facebook group:

www.facebook.com/groups/ClanMathesonNewZealand

2023 News for the UK and European Branch

The UK and European branch held its annual meeting on 14 May 2022. As has become custom post-COVID, we held the AGM in a hybrid format with several members joining us online. David and Susie Mathieson very kindly hosted those of us who were able to join in person and laid on a superb lunch for members – thank you both!



Pictures taken following the AGM. L – R: Bella Craven, Andrew Matheson, Susie Mathieson, Ron Lowry, Will Craven, Renuka Speed, Tim Speed, Sam Speed, Alexander Matheson (The Chief), Katharine Matheson, Stuart Latto, Malcolm Heeley, David Mathieson

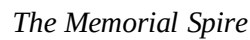


*L – R: Ron Lowry, Will Craven
Renuka Speed, Tim Speed, Sam Speed*



L – R: Bella Craven, Susie Matheson

The AGM was followed by a trip to International Bomber Command Centre at Lincoln. The IBCC is a fantastic museum acknowledging the efforts of Bomber Command during the Second World War.



MASSON RM • MASTERS AH • MASTERS HA • MASTERS HE • MASTERS LG
MASTERS PW • MASTERS RL • MATCHETT WMJ • MATE TH • MATE VH
MATELOWSKI JK • MATHER W • MATHERS JB • MATHESON A • MATHESON AC
MATHESON AM • MATHESON ANS • MATHESON C • MATHESON EM
MATHESON HM • MATHESON RH • MATHESON WR • MATHEWS AC
MATHEWS FG • MATHEWS G • MATHEWS RN • MATHESON AJ • MATHESON JJ
MATHESON MA • MATHESON RM • MATHSON NA • MATHISON WT • MATKIN FJ
MATON JAT • MATON SJJ • MATSON MK • MATSUMOTO G • MATTHAMS RG
MATHEW RD • MATTHEWMAN CTR • MATTHEWMAN EC • MATTHEWS AFA
MATTHEWS AF • MATTHEWS AJ • MATTHEWS AS • MATTHEWS CEA
MATTHEWS CAW • MATTHEWS CJ • MATTHEWS DS • MATTHEWS EJA
MATTHEWS EL • MATTHEWS EW • MATTHEWS F • MATTHEWS FJ
MATTHEWS GO • MATTHEWS GJ • MATTHEWS GT • MATTHEWS HV
MATTHEWS HW • MATTHEWS J • MATTHEWS JH • MATTHEWS KEW
MATTHEWS KL • MATTHEWS LH • MATTHEWS LRB • MATTHEWS LW
MATTHEWS MT • MATTHEWS PM • MATTHEWS RA • MATTHEWS RF
MATTHEWS S • MATTHEWS SJ • MATTHEWS WJD • MATTHEWS SR • MATTHEWS LW
MATTHEWS SF • MATTHEWS CA • MATTHEWSZF S • MATTHEWS TC
MATTHEWS SL • MATTHEWS D • MATTHEWS NI • MATTHEWS PC • MATTHEWS BK
MATTHEWS LC • MATTHEWS ME • MATTHEWS PRM • MATTHEWS JA • MATTHEWS A
MATTHEWS FL • MATTHEWS EW • MATTHEWSLEY WJ • MATTHEWSLEY J • MATTHEWSLEY A
MATTHEWS RH • MATTHEWSLEY WJ • MATTHEWSLEY JA • MATTHEWSLEY A
MATTHEWS DH • MATTHEWSLEY WJ • MATTHEWSLEY JA • MATTHEWSLEY A

We will be holding our 2023 meeting on Saturday, 3 June. Katharine and Alexander Matheson will kindly host us and we'll of course set up a video link for those who cannot join in person. Details will follow by email shortly but if you have any questions or would like to signal interest before then, please email

Andrew Matheson

My piping began on the practice chanter when I was about 10, graduating to the goose (a practice chanter with a bag & blowpipe) before embarking on the pipes. This was with a pipe band which met in an old Territorial Army barracks. The first part of the evening's sessions started with the learners and tutor in one room, and then later on congregating with the other pipers and drummers in the parade hall to pipe and march. Alas, I gave up piping when I started college, and for many years they were only awoken from their slumber in the loft for Burns Nights and the occasional New Year celebrations. But it was once I was able to play a repertoire of tunes that I used to get invitations to Burns Suppers.

At that time, clad in the full band uniform with sweeping plaid, sword belt etc, it made quite an entrance into the various halls where the guests were eagerly awaiting their haggis w'neeps an' tatties (with no vegetarian options in those days). Whilst many events have faded from memory, others remain vivid for one reason or another.

I recall one occasion, I led Chef and Master of Ceremonies into the hall circling around and behind the guests. One lady who was rather slow in rising from her chair, managed to push her chair right into my path – knocking the blowpipe out of my mouth and banging the chanter, thus upsetting my rhythm. It probably only took a matter of seconds to recover but playing solo, it seemed to take forever.

And there was the time when the person about to address the haggis suddenly realised he was without his sgian dubh! Fortunately, I had a dirk which saved the day. On another occasion when the Master of Ceremonies had asked guests to stand for the arrival of the President and his wife, I suddenly found I was unable to strike-up as there was no pressure in the bag. One of the wretched drone reeds had fallen out. This was despite having arrived early to tune the pipes and play a few tunes to warm the bag before guests arrived. Thankfully, the pipe bag had a zipper and I was able to retrieve the offending reed and re-insert it with too much of a delay.

Another time when the organiser had forgotten to give clear instructions to the chef, the haggis to be addressed appeared, but alas it had already been sliced up and arrived on “the groaning trencher” with a skewer holding the pieces together. However, this was better than the time when the chef, when placing the trencher upon the table, tipped it, resulting in the unfortunate haggis rolling off. Thankfully for all concerned it remained on the table and was quickly replaced.

Just after I joined the local Rotary Club a number of years ago, they held a Burns Night at the local Golf Club and having arrived early to tune and warm the pipes, I waited at the bar before proceedings commenced. A member, a Scot, approached me at the bar and said in all seriousness, “Stuart, you didn’t have to hire a kilt for this event” (I should add I’m second generation to be born south of the Border and don’t have a trace of a Scottish accent and he’d thought, me being a newbie, that I thought wearing the kilt was expected). When the evening was over, he approached me most apologetic as he hadn’t realised I was the piper!

An East European chef, relatively new to the UK, had never heard or seen of the kilt, nor had any notion of the seriousness surrounding the presentation, address and toast to this strange and novel beast. It took a bit of time to persuade him that he was not being set-up. But once he realised what was expected, he entered into the spirit with gusto. He proudly followed me wearing his tall chef’s toque and in addition to the guests, his co-workers from the kitchen were also keen to join in and film the experience.

I used to pipe for a number of suppers with a friend who gave the Address to the Haggis. He tended to the theatrical side and even most Scots familiar with the dialect would have difficulty in following his rendition of the poem. His shortened version was made the more dramatic by his flourishing the sgian dubh with wild abandon – on one occasion forcing me to duck to avoid blood being shed.

When I retired about 8 years ago, I took up the pipes and with the help of a competent tutor I’m once again enjoying playing more regularly. Starting again has been a struggle as embellishments that used to flow - just don’t, and learning tunes used to come without effort, but now fail to sink in quickly. But the skirl of the pipes continues to attract me and there are some great tunes out there so with no Pipe Major telling me what to play, what more could I want?

Stuart Latto

Clan Matheson USA

Greetings Clan Matheson Society from the United States Branch. We wish all a healthy and prosperous 2023 and hope to see you at the various Scottish Festivals and Highland Games around the country this year. We look forward to our planned International Clan Gathering in Scotland in July 2024.

2022 seemed a much calmer and manageable year after hosting the delayed Matheson Clan Gathering at Grandfather Mountain North Carolina in July 2021. Our report will be shorter this year as Covid worries and California regulations put a damper on gatherings in that state where our longstanding Deputy for the West Coast, **Roger Mathison**, was so active in convening Matheson Clan tents for so many years pre-Covid. We are hopeful that Roger's health and energy recovers and we regain our presence at the many games where he convened tents for so many years. To those of you in California, please reach out to either Roger or me to discuss convening tents for us.

In May 2022, **Terri Norburg** (Savannah, Georgia) again convened the Clan Matheson tent at the Savannah Scottish Games with her husband **Marty** and their daughter – pictured with Marty's father. Fast forward to October with Terri and Marty convening our Clan Matheson tent at the Stone Mountain Highland Games outside Atlanta, Georgia, where Terri took some amazing video of the 500-strong massed pipe bands all playing. See her Facebook posts. We missed seeing Terri and Marty at Grandfather Mountain in July as they were actually enjoying time in Scotland. Their energy and enthusiasm is contagious and we hope they make it back to Grandfather Mountain in 2023 and we truly appreciate their presence at the festivals in Georgia.



Terri and family at Savannah Games 2022



Terri and family at Stone Mtn

In July, we built on the momentum from 2021 as **Ed and Cindy Matheson** again served as our Conveners at the 66th Grandfather Mountain Highland Games held July 7-10, 2022 at Macrae Meadows (Linville, North Carolina). At the opening Torchlight Ceremony for the Calling of the Clans, **Marion Matheson Robeson** (Ashville, NC) announced Clan Matheson this year with great spirit and a warm calling. Ed and Cindy's extended family have been camping at the Macrae Meadows campground for a decade now and have established Matheson Corner (see Google Maps) where they hosted many of us for dinner Saturday evening and where they also host a ceilidh each year with **Branson Matheson** (Ed's son), who has also been very helpful to our Clan Matheson USA technology needs. We had a wonderful turnout of over 40 Mathesons with some familiar faces returning from our 2021 festivities. This year, brothers **Peter and Will Hayes** brought along their brother **Dan Hayes**. As Peter heads into retirement this year we are hoping to enlist him and Brenda as our Conveners in Austin, Texas!



The Hayes Brothers

Our 2022 Clan Matheson Grandfather Mountain tents were anchored by a group of almost 20 Mathesons from the Dayton, Ohio area who made their first trip to Grandfather Mountain with three generations of family in tow. We were certainly safe with Zenia, OH Police Officer **Harold Matheson** and his daughter, Officer **Alexandria (Allie) Matheson Mumpower**, pictured with Harold's wife **Debbie Matheson** and Allie's amazing kids **Emmett and Hadley** who were wonderful help throughout the games. They braved the rain and carried our Clan Matheson banner through the very wet Parade of Tartans at Sunday's closing ceremonies. Harold reports they have rented a house and are coming back for the 2023 games!



Harold and Debbie Matheson with daughter Allie Matheson and grandchildren, Emmett and Hadley



The Ohio Mathesons

The weather could not have been better all weekend... that is... until our final day Sunday, which saw a fine wet Scottish mist descend upon us for the morning Kirkin' of the Tartan worship service. Chief's Lieutenant for the USA **Colvin Matheson**, Convener **Ed Matheson**, and retired Chaplain **Bob Friend** (pictured) gathered in advance of the Parade of Tartans but the skies did indeed open up just in time for the clans to march in the closing ceremony—with Ed Matheson carrying our tartan banner.



Colvin Matheson, Ed Matheson & Bob Friend



Heavy weather during the Parade of the Tartans at the closing ceremony



Ed Matheson carrying the Clan Banner

We have reserved our tents again for Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, which will be held July 6-9, 2023. Please visit their web site at www.gmhg.org if you would like to learn more. It is very important that you arrange for passes and parking early, so don't wait for the last minute. There are plenty of great places to stay in the area. Grandfather Mountain hosts the oldest and most prestigious highland gathering in the United States and you won't want to miss either the opening Torchlight Ceremony (Thursday evening) or the closing Parade of Tartans (Sunday late morning). Bring your tartan and your family and make sure to join fellow Matheson's in the parade. You can find pictures we have posted at the Clan Matheson USA Facebook Group page.

Also in July 2022, **Dallas Matheson Griffiths** (Provo, Utah) convened a tent at the Payson Scottish Festival in Payson, Utah. Dallas is graciously stepping in to fill the shoes of **Shawn Matheson** as our longtime Utah Convener. Here, Dallas is pictured with his three daughters and newborn with father-in-law Dave Montgomery...enjoying their shady tent location. For 2023, Dallas and his wife Ali hope to convene tents at the Redstone Highland Games in St. George, Utah (April 2023), Salt Lake City Highland Games (June 2023), Payson Scottish Festival (July 2023) and Scots on the Rocks Celtic Games & Festival (October 2023). A big shout out to Shawn also for his years representing Clan Matheson at the Payson and St. George, Utah Scottish Games and for his foresight in recruiting Dallas to convene our tents in Utah, where there is a strong Matheson presence.



To round out our presence at various Scottish festivals for the year, in September 2022 the annual Virginia Scottish Games at Great Meadows (The Plains, Virginia, just outside Washington, DC) were again held Labor Day weekend. Luckily, it was not as sweltering hot as in 2021. Our Deputy for the East Coast, **John Aakesson** and his brother **Alec Aakesson** (both residing in Northern Virginia) have convened our Clan Matheson tent for decades and we remain grateful for their efforts and enthusiasm. We enjoyed the company of our former Chief's Lieutenant for the USA, **Malcolm Matheson III** (The Plains, VA) along with his eldest son (my brother) **Malcolm Matheson IV**, and Ed and Cindy Matheson came up from the Tidewater region where they live. For all those in the Virginia-DC-Maryland area, please join us in 2023.

If you have not already joined the Clan Matheson USA Facebook Group, we invite you to do so. We now have 266 members of the Group and it is wonderful to see the members post and communicate. A great deal of thanks goes out to **Shawn Matheson** (St. George, Utah) who established the Facebook Group and has acted as administrator. Shawn has passed that baton to **Rich Mathieson** (Cookeville, Tennessee).

Many thanks Rich for taking this on and I look forward to working with Rich more as he has graciously volunteered his service and military organizational skills to assist us going forward! As a new granddad in 2022, Rich can't wait to adorn his new generation in plaid. He is reaching out to the Middle Tennessee Highland Games (Henderson, TN - just outside Nashville) to convene a tent in September 2023.



The Akkersons at the Virginia Games

The USA Branch still has more to do organizationally and now with Covid largely behind us and the resumption of the many Scottish festivals across our country, we would love to hear from clan members that might have interest in convening tents for us. We seem to have interest for Texas and New Hampshire so far and I invite you to reach out through Facebook or my email, which is on the web site

www.clanmathesonusa.com. **Speaking of our website, the USA website needs updating and that will be on the list to do in short order.** Continued effort to further digitize is a goal as well, but I suspect members may still enjoy the hard copy newsletter we send. However, due to costs, we are only able to send to our dues paying members. That is now less than half the names on our roles, so hopefully we can improve there. We are very thankful to the handful of members who generously support us with amounts far above the modest annual dues.

Please keep in touch. Send us your news. Join us on our Clan Matheson Society USA Facebook Group page... And, plan for the July 2024 Clan Gathering in Scotland! We hope to see you there.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colvin Matheson

Chief's Lieutenant for the USA