



The Clan Matheson Society Australia Newsletter

Invitation to AGM via ZOOM will come separately

At the February Clan Picnic, our Annual General Meeting was scheduled for 23 August (see page 2 of the May Newsletter). The current health restrictions in Victoria make it impossible to hold a physical AGM in Williamstown as originally scheduled or, indeed, anywhere in Melbourne. We were unable to hold our previously-scheduled Committee meeting (usually held as the 'May Muster') as a physical meeting on May 24th. However, we were able to hold it successfully as a 'virtual' meeting, using the ZOOM web-based software package. Your Committee has also agreed that we should conduct the AGM in a similar way, given the uncertainty as to when we might be able to conduct a face-to-face AGM safely.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Invitation to Clan AGM	1
Vale, Kate Lowry	1
Summary of May meeting	2
Tatura Water Tower Mural	3
A Life of Piping	4
Society Office Bearers	5

No forthcoming events page this time because of Covid-19.

Accordingly, I propose to conduct our AGM as a Zoom video conference on 23rd August starting as close to 12:00 as we can. Alison Matheson has kindly allowed us to use her account with ZOOM to schedule a meeting for 90 minutes from 12:00pm until 1:30pm on that date. I shall send out the link to the AGM separately, together with papers associated with the AGM when they have been prepared. Please read that email, when it comes, carefully as it will contain information not available otherwise.

In this issue, there are two articles, one by Rob Mathieson, one time Vice-President of this Society and still serving on the Committee. He has other interests and describes a recent activity in one of these. The other article is by Warren Matheson, our redoubtable piper, describing how he became interested in piping.

Happy reading...

We were very sad to hear in June of the death of Kate Lowry (nee Matheson), stalwart Clan Matheson UK member and wife of Ron Lowry. Ron's message said she died in hospital a few days after a heavy fall at home. She had a woodland funeral as she desired. I shall miss her infectious smile and impish sense of humour.



Kate Lowry at Prestonfields Hotel Edinburgh during the 2004 International Gathering. Note the silk Matheson tartan jacket.



Kate and Ron Lowry at the Clan Picnic in Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne on 19th February 2006. Note the silk Clan Matheson jacket.

CLAN MATHESON

Summary of virtual meeting held by Zoom on 24 May 2020 12:00 pm

Attendees via Zoom: Warren Matheson, Janet Blainey, Genevieve Ahearn, Rob Mathieson, Helen Mathieson, Euan McGillivray, Colin Matheson, Mary Molan

Apologies: Ruth Pearce, Roma Jorgenson, Brad Matheson

The meeting agreed that this Zoom-facilitated meeting would be recognised as one of the requisite four Committee meetings per year.

Arising from previous minutes, there was some discussion of the ongoing need and expense of incorporation of the Society. Ruth had made enquiries about the incorporation status of other clan societies – thanks, Ruth. She found some are incorporated and others are not. Discussion ensued about the onerous process to become incorporated, benefits of being incorporated, and responsibilities of incorporation. Responsibilities include annual meeting requirements, including an AGM, reporting to Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), holding public liability insurance. The CAV fee for registration of Clan Matheson Society Inc. is relatively small and the bother of reporting is not onerous, particularly when compared with the onerous process of registration itself. Insurance and incorporation status to remain as is, at least until AGM.

Finances of the Society are sound, Genevieve advised many people had paid membership dues in response to the newsletter request. No requests have been made by 'phone this year. Bank balance as at 7 May 2020 was \$6,956.03.

Website: Warren has made contact with Brenton Haywood who maintains his pipe band's website. Brenton has made contact with Brad re. website handover materials.

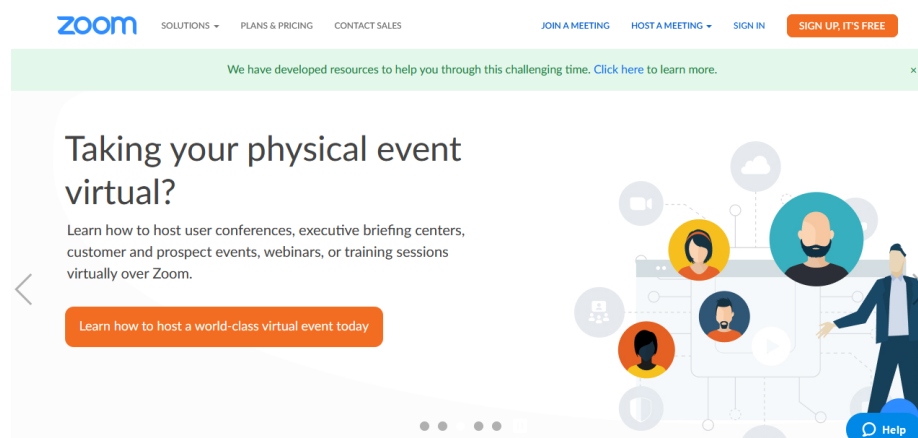
Newsletter: Colin sent last Australian Society newsletter out by email in most cases, but also home-printed hard copies for the six members requiring them – thanks, Colin. The Chief's Newsletter was printed in colour for the six non-email members requiring it; all others were sent out by email.

Roma is to step down as Secretary at the AGM, so we need to elect a replacement in August. Genevieve advised she is willing to continue as Treasurer at the AGM, provided she does not have to take on Secretary responsibilities as well. She would prefer to attend Zoom meetings such as this one, than four face-to-face meetings p.a. General discussion about preference for digital vs face-to-face meetings post Covid-19 restrictions; some mix of the two likely; several would opt to retain face-to-face February picnic – to be discussed further at AGM.

AGM to be held on 23 August, Covid19—permitting. November meeting proposed for 22 November, subject to new Committee elected in August.

Meeting closed at 12:55pm

This is the Zoom website. No need to log in to this, though. To join a meeting you just click on the link in the email I'll send you. If you are asked for the password, it will be in the email from me.



TATURA WATER TOWER MURAL.

The Tatura Sub-Branch of the Victorian RSL, in 2017, proposed to the Shepparton Council that a mural of two images be painted on the Tatura water tower, one image facing south and the other facing north, thus dominating the approaches to the town.



View from the south

The south image will be of General Sir John Monash, arguably Australia's greatest War time leader and outstanding Citizen and the north image will be of Trooper Alfred Clive Wooster of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment, who tragically fell during the 1st World War. It is particularly appropriate that Monash should be on the tower because he designed it in 1911 (along with others in Tongala, Rochester and Echuca) long before his exploits in WW1.

As Chairman of the project I pointed out the advantages of using the tower, as it stands 27 metres or 90 feet, towering so to speak, over the town and can be seen many kilometres from Tatura when approaching from the north and south, the main roads from Melbourne and Bendigo / Echuca.

The fact that Tatura does not have a silo to go along with the silo trail that incorporates many, many towns throughout Victoria, I believe that this water tower mural would be included into the very popular silo trail.

In gathering a budget forecast, I presented our proposal to the businesses that I needed to deal with, and they readily gave discounts of varying degrees, all were very supportive of the project.

The local State Member for Northern Victoria, the Hon. Mr Mark Gepp MP was right behind the project from the start and was instrumental in getting me an audience in State Parliament House with the State Government Minister for Veterans Affairs to progress the project. He in turn arranged for the Grants Department to interview me and to inform me as to the requirements needed to fill in a successful application to obtain the grant to complete the project. I was successful in obtaining the total funds needed to complete the whole project.

We are hoping to have the mural finished by late November this year, if we are blessed with the COVID19 restrictions being lifted. If I wait until an appropriate next significant anniversary date, we will have to delay the mural until the 24th of April 2021, and given the time it has taken to get to this stage, it just seems "a bridge to far". On this day back in 1912 (109 years ago) the wife of the Water Authority Chairman flicked a switch to open a valve to allow water to flow into the bowl of the tower.

The November date is preferable also because it will be within range of summer and the holiday months, where people tend to travel around to visit places and enjoy what other towns have to offer.

I hope to be able to bring you some more happy news in future newsletters with some photographs of the mural artist at work.

Robert Mathieson. (Matheson family, circa 1770 Isle of Skye and Australia 1852 on the good ship Araminta).



View from the north

A life of Piping

By Warren Matheson

I don't mean a life of Plumbing or Cake decorating, I would like to explain if I can what it truly means when you pick up a bagpipe practice chanter for the very first time. Your life has changed for ever, from being a normal human life to the life of a piper.

My mother played bagpipes with the Bendigo Ladies Pipe Band and my father played with the Bendigo Highland Pipe Band. They met, fell in love, got married and along came me. From a very early age I was taken to all parades, contests, playouts and highland games around the State and got involved with the sounds and the atmosphere that surrounded such events. My parents gave it up for a time while they were building a home and raising a family etc. I found that I had a love for the sound of the bagpipes and I wanted to learn.

When I was around 10 years old, mum said it was time that I had a hobby instead of lounging around all day watching television and so she said "do you want to learn the bagpipes". I said "Aw yeah alright"

So mum took me to see a big grumpy old Scotsman named Wally Stables. At least he seemed that way to a 10-year-old but now I regard him as one of my best friends and he is still playing with our band. He used to scare me mainly because the way he spoke with a broad Scottish accent and I felt guilty for not practising enough during the week, so I gave it away. But I had fallen in love with the beautiful strange melodic squeaky sound of the bagpipes.

When I was around 12 years old I started to play around with a practice chanter; there was always at least one lying around the house. Mum and dad showed me some techniques and when they saw it was clear that I was interested they took me along to a fellow by the name of Neil Innes who was very patient with me. Then I started to learn the bagpipes for real and I joined the Bendigo Highland Pipe Band which I'm still a member of today.

It wasn't long after that I became interested in almost everything Scottish thistles, shortbreads, butter-scotch, clans and much later, whisky. All through my school years my nick name was Scotchy and I don't think half my mates even knew what my real name was.

I used to love to play and the more I played the better I got and it wasn't long before I became the Pipe Corporal. It was my duty to play solos and harmonies which I quite enjoyed. While other kids were going to soccer practice and footy, I was practising marching and playing. When the other kids were playing in footy grand finals I was competing in Highland Games. We got very good at it, in the late 1970's and early 80's the Bendigo Highland Pipe Band were unbeatable in our division.

With the passing of time I got married, had a family of two daughters, Kathryn and Laura, and a son Ross (all good Scottish names) and I left Bendigo Highland Pipe band. But that itch was still there and then I was approached by a member of the armed forces Warrant Officer 2 Peter Barker to see if I was interested in joining a civilian pipe band. This was to be formed to support military parades and veteran events and was to be called the Fortuna Pipes & Drums. I was a little reluctant at first until I was told that they did a lot of drinking and very little playing. This turned out to be a lie.



The Bendigo Highland Pipe Band taking out 1st prize Ringwood Highland Gathering "C" Grade

We played for passing-out parades, cadet reviews, Anzac Day Marches, Remembrance Day Ceremonies and Tattoos. We played for the Army, Navy and Air Force as well as most civilian jobs like Bendigo Easter Fair and the like.



Fortuna Pipes & Drums at the White Hills Uniting Church

was, and some were retired servicemen, but I think I fitted in well. In this band I did everything the Army guys did, went on Army camps to play reveille, played on the ABC radio, and, of course, the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, which without a doubt was the highlight of my piping career.

It was in this band that I learned the traditional art of Whisky drinking (I'm having one now as a matter of fact). While in Scotland after the Tattoo I hired a car with my good friend Gordon Watson (far left in photo) and spent a week touring. After that I took a tour bus to Europe taking my bagpipes with me. I played in the Swiss Alps and started a party that was otherwise a dull evening, I played at a Dutch restaurant on the dyke to celebrate a couple's wedding anniversary.

Eventually I left the Army band and rejoined Bendigo Highland Pipe Band where my piping life started. Of course, I have also joined Clan Matheson and I'm the Clan Piper which I am very honoured to be.



Me playing for Jimmy Barnes, Chieftain for the Day at the Bundanoon Highland Gathering outside the Clan Matheson Tent

For all this, it was in this band that I really discovered what playing the bagpipes was really all about. It wasn't the sweet melodic sound that I loved or the Scottish Traditions that I learned, no it was men who fell in battle urged on by sound of the bagpipes, it was the way the troops stood tall when they had a pipe band play while they were marching, even non Scots were brought to tears at the sound of the Great Highland War Pipe a half a world away from their native home in Scotland.

I was soon invited down to practise with the 5th/6th Royal Victoria Regiment Pipes & Drums. They were short on numbers and so I became one of the four civilian members of the band. These four were pipers, as I



Me on the far right playing in the Edinburgh Tattoo, official photo

I started out to learn the guitar which I very much enjoy but I decided to concentrate on my piping. I think I made the right choice as I don't think I could have done what I've done had I not been a piper. I know I've been very lucky, I had a good start with both my parents being pipers but I think anyone can do it if they love the instrument enough.



Warren Matheson, playing at the Tri-services Ball

Notes:

- 1. We have not included a forthcoming events list in this Newsletter because of the uncertainty about when such events may be possible in the future. The November meeting is currently scheduled for 22 November.**
- 2. Please, please send me stories I can include in the Newsletter. Your efforts at finding out stuff from the various websites, Scotlands People, Ancestry, Find my Past etc would be very much appreciated. I can write the story if you send me what it is you would like to say.**

Colin Matheson
Acting Newsletter Editor

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