



The Clan Matheson Society Australia Newsletter

From the (acting) Editor....

This Year has been pretty awful for the whole country, with lockdowns, restricted travel and no holidays overseas, let alone those who have suffered from the Covid-19 disease itself. Most activities of all highland societies have been in abeyance until times are easier. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel! The Melbourne Highland Games and Celtic Festival (renamed Ringwood Highland Games) are scheduled to take place on Sunday 20 March 2022 at Eastfield Park, Croydon (<https://melbournehighlandgames.org.au/>). Appropriately encouraged by this, we are planning to hold our Annual Clan Matheson Picnic at Flagstaff Gardens in late February. We shall discuss arrangements for this at our next Committee meeting and will let you know in plenty of time. It will be a time to bring out all our Clan finery, kilts, sashes, brooches, Skean Dhuis, tartan dresses to celebrate release from the prison of the pandemic.

Before the more recent lockdowns in NSW, David Mathieson was fortunate to be able to travel from his home in Port Macquarie, NSW to the town of Maclean on the Clarence River in northern NSW. In case you didn't know, Maclean has a Scottish history going back to the 1840s when

Scots migrated there to escape the famine at home and in the hope of finding gold. It has held a Highland Games for well over 100 years and, in preparation for the Olympic Torch relay in the year 2000, painted tartans on power poles throughout the town. There are now over 200 of them (are there 200 genuine Clans?). David Mathieson was able to find a Mathieson one when he visited in June. There must be at least two as there is one near the Clarence river as well.



David and Lenore Mathieson at Maclean



I hope you all have a safe and happy Christmas and that we'll be able to get together at the Picnic in February

Colin Matheson (A/Editor)

CLAN MATHESON

Summary of virtual Annual General Meeting held by Zoom on 29th August 2021, 2pm

Due to the Covid pandemic, there has been little activity this year except for the Newsletter, some Zoom meetings and the Website. The newsletter could always do with more stories. Colin is planning to publish those Matheson manuscripts that he can find, and is currently working on the first part of the Iomaire manuscript. The website is now capable of being more dynamic. After some uncertainties, the website is now being looked after by Brenton Hayward, an IT teacher in Bendigo. There are some newsletters there, accessible to anyone, although this year's ones are not there yet. There is a Members' Area with nothing in it yet, and there are some updated membership forms. Several new members have been able to use these to join the Society. The Facebook page continues to be impressive, with over 500 likes. There are lots of photos of the Grandfather Mountain Games. Well done, everyone concerned.

Genevieve Ahearne reports that the Society's funds were just under \$7,000, with two new members having paid their dues. The main item of expenditure this year were costs associated with shifting the website (\$357.45).

The following were elected to the Committee:

Colin Matheson (President); Warren Matheson (Vice-President); Mary Molan (Secretary); Genevieve Ahearne (Treasurer); Janet Blainey, Ruth Pearce, Brad Matheson, Euan McGillivray, Miriam Rimmer, David Mathieson, Roma Jorgenson, Rob Mathieson and Helen Mathieson (Committee)

The story of the migrant ship *Ticonderoga* was discussed, through interest by Brad (ancestor was a passenger) and Janet. There might be a Newsletter story on it. Old magazines from the Highlands 120 years ago contain a wealth of information of interest to members so we'll try to include some in future Newsletters. Reminders about membership dues were seen as useful, as is information about merchandise. It is possible to obtain facemasks online, printed with the Matheson tartan. If we are to try to sell more merchandise, we need to establish an efficient workflow procedure for arranging dispatch and to marry payments with purchases and invoices.

Discussion again took place about the Members' Area, which currently holds no articles or information. The issue is whether to make information accessible to all comers or, if not, how much to retain behind a paywall. This issue has been discussed at previous meetings, with no resolution as yet. Genevieve noted many of our members live around Australia, and are not able to attend events held in Victoria; she sees this as a reason for including as much information as possible on the website free of charge. Brad said that the popularity of the website and Facebook page is a double-edged sword; many people, from within and outside of Australia, are happy with the information on the website and Facebook, so they see no reason to join the Society. They might ask what it is they would get for their \$25. Euan noted that Facebook material is very different from web content – web content is more long-form information. Euan also said that the Clan McGillivray Society Australia, of which he is Commissioner for Australia, mainly attracts new members by people discovering the Society through their own genealogical research.

The question of genealogical research and the help the Clan is able to provide was raised. Previously, help has been given as a service to financial members. There are issues of privacy about contacts between potential relatives. A list of names associated with Mathesons would be of assistance to researchers. There are various unofficial lists published online, but our former Chief's view was that these were rarely legitimate.

CLAN MATHESON

Summary of virtual Annual General Meeting held by Zoom on 29th August 2021, continued...

The Grandfather Mountain Highland Games took place, together with a Clan Matheson Gathering but our Chief, Sir Alexander Matheson was unable to attend due to Covid restrictions at the time. There are pictures of the Games on the Facebook page (posted with permission of Colvin Matheson—US Chief's Lieutenant). Continued support of the Facebook page through input of new content (as also for the Newsletter) is necessary to maintain its continued popularity.

Those present agreed to maintain the current membership fee level at \$25pa.

The Chief is giving consideration to a possible future gathering in Scotland. Sir Alexander said he would like to hold a future gathering in conjunction with the Glencarron Games at Attadale, as has happened in the past. These Games are held in July, so the question is whether to try to hold an International Clan Matheson Gathering in 2023, or in 2024. In 2024, the Gathering might also link travellers with the possibility of attending the Olympics (Paris, July – August 2024) and the Edinburgh Tattoo (August 2024). Those present at the meeting wished to express their support of the Chief's intention, in principle with no strong preference for either year.

Next meeting to be held by Zoom on December 12 at 2pm.

The Clan Picnic is proposed to be held on either February 20 or 27 at Flagstaff Gardens if possible. If Covid-19 makes this impossible, another Zoom meeting will be held on that day.

The Society regrets to announce the death of Shirley Miller Matheson Pearce (née Matheson) who, among other things was the mother of Ruth Pearce and aunt of Euan McGillivray, current Committee members. Ruth writes...

"My mother Shirley (and Euan's aunt) died on 19 August. With only 10 participants allowed to attend the funeral service, it was a very personal celebration of a wonderful person – lots of laughter and tears expressing our memories.

And the Matheson profile was strong. She was born in 1924, the youngest child of Margaret Ellen Miller and William Farquhar Matheson. Her mother died when she was four so that her growing up in Wycheproof with her sisters Ina and Betty and brother Murdoch was shared around the Matheson and Miller families, grandparents, aunts and uncles. She lived on the Matheson farm, Rothesay and in her grandmother's residence (also Rothesay) in town near the family businesses. The Mathesons were very active and influential in the district, including local government representation and not to forget, football!

Her Matheson family and relatives were very aware of the family history, especially motivating her sister Betty's *The Farquhar Matheson History*, which she published in 1982.

Mum and Dad in their very busy international travels, spent time personally exploring the Matheson stories centred around Craig, Rosshire, Scotland.

Mum was the last of her Matheson generation but there are many of us ready, willing and able to continue to engage our Matheson identities.

The making of Heather Ale—extracts from the Celtic Monthly of 1900

In the Celtic Monthly magazine of 1900, a certain R.C. MacLagan MD FRSE wrote an article in two parts in which he described experiments attempting to reproduce a Pictish method for preparing ale made from heather. This was mentioned in 1526 by Hector Boece (remember that the Picts were long gone by then!). It says that heather has a purple flower in July that is as sweet as honey and that the Picts made a delicious drink but never wrote down the recipe. Other sources say that the Picts refused to share the recipe with the invading Scots. MacLagan says there is also a tradition on the Isle of Islay where heather was grown for making ale. Apparently Sir Walter Scott says in the *Monastery* that heather ale was frequently used at meals in the time of Bonny Prince Charlie. There is also an Irish recipe in which the tops of heather are boiled for 45 minutes, cooled to 70 degrees (F?) and fermented with yeast. In the article there is a discussion about whether malt or sugar was added, together with a recipe from a Miss Paull of the Manse of Tullynessle which, when tried, seemed like a poor sample of ginger beer with heather instead of ginger.

MacLagan then obtained a recipe "holograph" (what can this be?) of the manufacturer (who?) as follows:-

"2 lbs. of heather bloom, 1 lb hops, 2 oz. ground ginger, 3 lbs. syrup. Boil all together in 2 gallons of water for half an hour. Strain and add other 2 gallons of water, and when it is cold as new milk, add half a cupful of barm (leavening). Cover it up for twelve hours. Skim the top, pour it off gently to keep the barm that has sunk to the bottom, then bottle and cork firmly."

This recipe seems to have failed to ferment at all, although we would wonder why, given that it contains syrup. Doubting his brewing talents, Dr MacLagan was indefatigable and thought he would try again, using a professional brewer, but it produced no alcohol at all. So he tried again, this time trying to ferment malt with the addition of heather flowers. He says "After 6 days there was no appearance of alcoholic fermentation, the heather blooms themselves were covered with a green mould, where they floated on top of the wort, and the smell was by no means pleasant..."

Dr MacLagan now thought that the heather would probably not ferment by itself, but perhaps could be used as a flavouring much as hops are in more traditional beers. So he tried this in a commercial brewery and found that it worked well, but that there were many bacteria present, presumably from the heather, so that it would not keep well. So he tried again (!), taking the brewer's advice of more heather and at last all looked well, but the brewery caught fire and the only result from their efforts were "two hoops of the barrel and some charred staves". Dr MacLagan concludes that the question was "not one of flavouring malt, but of fermenting heather itself, and it being clearly proved that this was impossible, it was unnecessary to make further experiments. Nor has the results of our trials led Mr Melvin (the brewer) to introduce to his consumers heather ale". The remainder of the article is devoted to examining the idea of making whisky from the sap of the birch tree—"equally useless; and can only give satisfaction as a drink or a medicine from an imaginative point of view".

This, however, is not the end of the story. The Editor of the Celtic Monthly had some communication with Dr MacLagan who issued a challenge promising "to subscribe £5 to any anti-liquor combination agreed upon, if any reader will send him heather flowers or seeds from Caithness, or any district in Scotland...capable of alcoholic fermentation". Our own Kenneth Matheson (2nd Baronet of Lochalsh) wrote to the Magazine suggesting that the seeds should be used rather than the flowers. He offers that if Dr MacLagan tried this, he "shall be very glad as a Scottish Temperance Reformer to have the opportunity of tasting a sample". He writes the next month "Sir—I am afraid the recipe for heather ale put forward by your correspondent this month will not satisfy our chemical friends in the matter of alcohol. They will be prone to dub the beverage "treacle peerie " or " ginger pop." I consider myself fortunate that I can redeem the situation at this stage by supplying a piece of information I heard at a Perthshire *ceilidh* last fall. An old woman who was relating how in her girlhood she was wont to help her father at the sma' still on the hill, on being asked if she had ever seen heather ale made, promptly replied : ' Foof, foof, we made ale out of the thick of it.' Now surely this is the true effective kind of heather ale, for the secret of which the whole tribe of Argyllshire Maclellans fought and died."

Translations of the quote in the last letter by Kenneth Matheson to reveal the great secret of heather ale will be rewarded by a donation of £5 to the Clan Society by the Acting Editor.

Colin Matheson

March of the Mathesons marches again

Earlier this year I received a request from the UK Chief's Lieutenant for the sheet music of "The March of The Mathesons" by our redoubtable piper, Warren Matheson. I duly sent it off and received the following thanks from Stuart Matheson Latto

"I gave it an airing on 7th September when our Rotary Club took a coach load of local Veterans to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire (the Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire attended to see the coach off). I was one of the helpers so played the pipes for them. The oldest Vet was 98 who had been a radio operator on Lancasters during the war.

The March of the Matheson goes very well with the tune The Badge of Scotland which I play together."

Well done, Warren!

(Note the tartan Stuart is wearing!)



News from Margaret Fleming, received in September

We are in our sixth week and getting stale – I've forgotten how to go out and how to socialise. Last year was the same!! But I have spent my time the last two years researching, collating, writing, bothering distant relatives for information and photos and have created TWO Fleming Books. I had written three books on my Mother's side – McGowan, Muller and Matheson. Now I am doing three on my Father's side. My distant cousin Bill Fleming wrote a fabulous book on our first ancestors to arrive in Port Phillip – Robert and Janet Fleming from Edinburgh, starting in 1660 in Scotland ... to 1860 in Port Phillip – Brunswick – called "Edinburgh to Mia Mia" (A4, 322 pages) and mine was a sequel called "Beyond Mia Mia" (A4, 185 pages) – all about the five surviving children of Robert and Janet, their children and grandchildren. Mia Mia is the house they built in West Brunswick in 1849 and believe it or not it is still standing and lived in. We had a book launch in March this year for the two books at the Royal Historical Society.

My next book, due to be launched in a few weeks (now published – A/Ed) is about the middle son – John Wood Fleming 1837-1919 – born on the banks of the Yarra, and his wife Mary Watson Weir 1843-1920 – a biography of my great grandparents and Brunswick. It is called "A Grand Old Man of Brunswick" because he was on the Brunswick Municipal Council for 52 years 1867-1919, and Mayor four times.

Next year I'll do a detailed one of my Grandfather James Weir Fleming and Granny Florence Mary Jones, and Dad and his sister Mary, but just for the family. I have been sorting old photos for two years as well – Dad took lots in the 1930s and 1940s.

So you can see I have plenty to keep me occupied – thank goodness for TROVE, online data bases, the phone and the internet!!!!

Margaret adds more recently that all three books are available from her (mmoxhamfleming3@bigpond.com) as follows: *Edinburgh to Mia Mia* (\$50 plus postage), *Beyond Mia Mia* (\$30 pp), *A Grand Old Man of Brunswick: John Wood Fleming biography* (\$35 pp).

Matheson Manuscripts

By Colin Matheson

In the last Newsletter, I wrote a little about my musings about the origins of the book “The History of The Mathesons” (HoM) and how its first incarnation was as a series of articles in *The Celtic Magazine* by the then Editor, Alexander MacKenzie, beginning in December 1881. MacKenzie says that the material on which he drew to write the series of articles was in the form of two manuscripts, one called the “Iomaire MS” (written by Roderick Matheson) and the other the “Bennetsfield MS” (written by Capt John Matheson, 21st Chief of the Clan). The first edition of HoM was published in 1882 and seems to be no more than a reprint of the original articles in book form, based on the two manuscripts as before. The second edition was based on the first edition but was edited and added to considerably by the second author, Alexander MacBain who extended the scope of the work beyond the genealogies of the families prominent at the time (late 19th century). He has also used a third manuscript, called “The Tiree-Manchester MS”, written originally as a series of letters by Duncan Matheson as well as other sources. All these sources derive from the 19th century and there is only very sketchy documentary evidence of Matheson history before then, although I would be very happy to be proved wrong here.

Alexander MacKenzie writes a little about Roderick, the author of the Iomaire MS, and gives him several names: Ruaraigh ‘n Immer or Rory of Immer as well as Roderick on p 118 of HoM. He was the 4x G grandson of Roderick of Fernaig, eldest son of Murchadh Buidh, 13th Chief of Clan Matheson who flourished in the 16th century. He was born in about 1760 and died in 1861 (according to Geni.com). He held the farm of Iomaire, also known as Immer, which appears on 19th century Ordnance Survey maps on the southeastern side of Loch Carron about 4km NE of Stromeferry. Roderick’s nephew, Alexander, lived on the Isle of Tiree (Inner Hebrides) and corresponded with Duncan Matheson in Manchester. These letters form the Tiree-Manchester MS, the third manuscript source for the second edition of HoM.



Looking across Loch Carron from Slumbay, near the village of Lochcarron. Iomaire (Immer) is on the other side of the Loch above the field of sheep in the foreground.

You can see from the photo, above, that the Loch Carron area is very beautiful on a sunny summer’s day. The Iomaire MS was published in the *Highland Home Journal*, part of the *Highland News* in three parts (April 7 1900, April 14 1900 and April 28 1900 – the dates are wrong in HoM). The pdf of the newspaper in the British Newspaper Archive was quite difficult to read (see below), so that I have had to guess a few words (in curly brackets {}). Any comments I have are in square brackets ([]). The original of this manuscript was deposited in the National Library of Scotland by Dr A F Matheson, Richmond, North Yorkshire on 30 March 1983.

You may notice some differences between the manuscript and the HoM 2nd Ed, and some of the genealogies are not generally accepted. That all Mathesons are of Irish origin is not supported by DNA evidence – some of us are Picts, some Scots (Irish), some Vikings etc. But you will see that some of the stories are familiar ones. We do not know what documentary sources Roderick used in compiling the manuscript.



MATHESON MANUSCRIPT HISTORIES

THE IOMAIRE MS.

Part 1

This MS., which is the earliest written account of the Mathesons, was written in 1824 by Roderick Matheson of Iomaire. Omitting the first paragraph, which contains the bardic and seanachie of the Gael, he thereafter goes on as follows:-

Whether the Mathesons emigrated from Denmark to Scotland before they went to Ireland, or came first to Ireland, and from thence to Scotland, we know not, but certain it is that they are an old race in Ireland. In Ossian's Poems mention is made of a Calmar MacMahon, an Irish chieftain who assisted Fingal in one of his wars in Ireland. It is well-known that Ossian, the aged Scottish bard, flourished between the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, so that the time when his father, Fingal, fought his battles, in the vigour of his youth, must have been a number of years previous to that period. The name MacMathan, MacMahon, or MacMathony, is still prevalent in Ireland. There is a tribe of this clan in Altona and its vicinity, a town of Lower Saxony, who have written records of their descent for 500 years back or upwards. On the borders of England and in the south of Scotland, they are called Mahons (with the omission of the Irish Mac) and Maddisons. In the peninsula of Kintyre, which is contiguous to Ireland, the ancient inhabitants were MacKiachans, MacKays, MacMaths. Such a diversity in the name for a long period is a very strong proof of the antiquity of the original tribe which emigrated from the Continent. A diversity is also observed in the spelling of the Englified name, for it is written Matheson, Mathison, Mathieson, and Mathewson, and some write Mathews, omitting the termination *on*. When Kenneth the third King of Scotland (alias Kenneth MacAlpin), was at war with the Picts in the ninth century, one of the House of Monaghan, a MacMathan, came to his assistance. After the termination of the war, which almost totally extirpated the race of the Picts, the King of Scotland rewarded his followers with gifts of lands. In this distribution Lochalsh was bestowed on MacMathon [sic]. His successors cannot be traced till the twelfth century. At that time flourished one of his descendants, viz., Kenneth Matheson of Lochalsh, whose daughter was married to Colin Fitzgerald, son of the Earl of Desmond in Ireland.



Thus Colin came from Ireland to assist King Alexander the Third of Scotland in the year 1263 [Statue of Alexander III at St Giles Cathedral Edinburgh - left]. When Haco, King of Norway, arrived with a numerous fleet in the Firth of Clyde, and, after landing, fought a bloody battle called "The Battle of the Largs", in which the Norwegians were defeated with great slaughter. Fitzgerald signalled himself in this battle, and for his services the King bestowed on him the territory of Kintail in Ross-shire. Upon receiving these lands, he came to reside in the castle of Island of Donnan. He married a daughter of Kenneth Matheson, who gave him, as her portion, part of Lochalsh, on condition that he would call his first son Kenneth. This promise he violated, and named his first son Colin, but called his second son Kenneth. The Mathesons were highly offended at this violation of the marriage contract, and meditated to revenge the supposed affront. When young Colin grew up, he went to visit his friends in Lochalsh, who, instead of giving him an agreeable entertainment, conveyed him to a private

Matheson Manuscripts continued...

valley in the Brays of Balmacarra, and then put him to death. The hollow where this horrid deed was perpetrated still retains the name of Glaic Chailean, or Colin's Valley. In consequence of Colin's murder, the heritage devolved on his brother Kenneth, whose son was called Kenneth MacKenneth, from whom the Mackenzies derived their name. The murderers fled to the north, and took refuge either in Caithness or Sutherland, where a respectable tribe of the Clan is still to be found. The Mathesons of Sutherland term themselves in the Gaelic "Mathonich". One of them was a general in the army of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, in the 15th [17th] century, by whom he was presented with a crest. The motto on the crest is "Heart and hand". The ancient motto of the Mathesons was the Latin word "Fuimus", which signifies "We have been", meaning that they were once a great clan and of high antiquity. A tribe of Mathesons were once the principal inhabitants of Strathbran. They had a separate burying place for themselves, to which no other {person} laid claim, and where none of any other name is interred unto this day. It is called "Cnoc nan Clerish", i.e. the Hillock or Tumulus of the Clergy. From this name it may be assumed that it was a place of worship. Around the tumulus are still visible the foundations of a circular ring of stones, which are frequently to be met with in the North of Scotland.

The lineal succession of the forementioned Kenneth Matheson cannot be followed until the end of the 14th century, when great disturbances were in the North on account of the rebellion of the Earl of Ross, whose daughter (some say his sister) was married to Kenneth Blaar, 8th Mackenzie of Kintail. At that time the Chief of the Mathesons of Lochalsh was Alastair MacRuairi (i.e., Alexander the son of Roderick). He was married to a daughter of Mackintosh of Mackintosh. He gave a slight cause of offence to Lord Sutherland, in consequence of the following circumstance. Matheson had an excellent greyhound called "Broddun Glas", i.e., {Grissly} (greyish) Dog. His Lordship insisted on a loan of the dog. His request was immediately granted, but the "Broddun", being {understood} to go home from any part, ran off to Lochalsh. Upon discovering his {retreat}, Lord Sutherland sent a man for



Loch Achaid n a H'Inich; gathering place to the right of the photo

him, to whom Matheson said - "I would gift a loan of the "Broddun", but would not part with him", which expression irritated his Lordship to such a degree that he raised an army to invade Matheson's property.

Whereupon he took a hill road westward till he came to Lub a 'Ghoill. Matheson, hearing of his coming, collected his men to oppose him. There is a particular spot {in} Achnahinich [see photo, left] of Lochalsh called Dail Achadatearnik, i.e., field between two descents, where the Mathesons always assembled upon going out to battle, thinking it lucky to set off on an expedition from that place. From this station Matheson marched up through Glen Uddalan till he came in sight of the Sutherlands, who were encamped on a hill in the braes of Pollintairbh, which hill bears the name of Cnoc

nan Cattach unto this day. Matheson kept himself concealed from the enemy till he got behind a hill opposite to them which from him still retains the name Cnoc Mhic Ruairi. Both parties came to an engagement on a plain between the two hills. They fought valiantly on both sides, but perceiving a party coming on on [sic] an adjacent height, which was sent by Mackintosh, Matheson's father-in-law, as a reinforcement, the Sutherlands betook themselves to flight. Many were killed on both sides in the retreat, and among the rest, Lord Sutherland himself. He was buried near a river's side in Altnabraan of Glenlainge. That spot still bears the name of "Luba Mhorair". Their flight was so precipitate that to avoid being taken they threw their baggage in a little loch, which still goes by the name of Lochan na Hullaidh, the lake of the treasure. For this cause Matheson was accused before the King as a man of the worst character, was apprehended, brought to Edinburgh, and beheaded there. He left two boys, the name of the elder of whom was John: the other's name is unknown.

It may not be improper to mention here that it is intended in the following narrative to trace the offspring of the youngest son first, judging this plan more methodical in order to have the head of each family mentioned last. Accordingly the said younger son got Lord Caithness' daughter with child. When she found herself in this condition she escaped and went round the northern coast, wishing to get to Lochalsh. After her arrival there she was delivered of a son by the roadside between Erbusaig and Balmacara. This son was called "Ian Gallach" or John of Caithness, and the place where he was born still retains the name of Leachd Ian Ghallaich, a cairn being erected on the spot to commemorate the fact. From him descended a numerous offspring, who were distinguished from the rest of the Mathesons by the term Clan Iain Ghallaich. Of these are Alexander Matheson, in Airnakaig, and Duncan, his brother; Roderick Matheson, in Portachulinn, and others in Skye, &c.

To return to John. When he arrived at manhood, he observed to his grandfather that he was desirous of recovering his hereditary property. His grandfather promised his assistance. John communicated his design to his most faithful friends in Lochalsh, who were very glad to receive him, provided they could accomplish his intention. Macleod appointed sentinels, whom he thought well affected towards him, one in each house, to watch the people's conduct, and give him notice of any personal danger. These watchers were termed "Buaninan", i.e., "unrestrained men". Matheson, making an agreement with his friends that they should kill in one night the Buanies who resided in the respective houses, came to Lochalsh with a band of men from Mackintosh, his grandfather.

Matheson Manuscripts continued...

He posted them in a private hollow between Reraig and Kirkton, which place is called Glaic na Fear. He went himself in disguise in the capacity of a mendicant carrying a wallet of fog to the house where Macleod and his mother resided in Tor an t-Slachdar of Reraig. He enquired [sic] if the mistress would buy red wool. She wished to see it, and, calling him in, a conversation ensued, when he asked her if she wished her son to come to his own rights. She replied that she wished to see that day. He immediately laid open his design to his mother, and then returned to his men. The country people were apprised of his arrival, and killed all the Buanies that night. One of them, called Mackecharna, slipped out of the house in which he was, and ran to warn Macleod of his danger, but was pursued and caught in a fen near Macleod's house, which fen goes by his name, Fetha Mhic Kecharna. Matheson and his men surrounded the house and set it on fire, himself attending the door with the intention of saving his mother. She soon appeared, having her husband concealed under her night-gown. When she passed the guard, she suffered Macleod to escape. He did not halt till he reached Doire Dhamn, a place in Duirness, where resided a poor man who had a boat. With this man Macleod bargained to go along with him to Lews, promising for that piece of service to give him free lands. When they arrived at Lews, Macleod's father being informed of what had happened, ordered to erect a gallows of the boat's oars, and thereon to hang the Lochalsh man, adding that the son's promise was fulfilled, viz., getting free land for ever: also that he was not true to his own country, neither would he be true to him. Matheson was not long in Lochalsh when Macleod came with an army against him, and landed at Ardhill. They came to an engagement at Kirkton. The field of battle is called Blar na Saidd. They did not stand long before Macleod's men gave way. A party of Matheson's men stood between them and the shore to prevent their embarkation. These were headed by a Matheson of the name of Ian Ciar Mac Mhurchi Mhic Thomais, who made great havoc among the enemy with his arrows. Part of his descendants are dispersed between the parishes of Urray and Redcastle, of whom I shall mention particularly Alexander Mackenzie, late agent for the British Linen Banking Company, Inverness, and Francis Mackenzie, merchant, Kyleakin. Both their grandfathers changed their original names, viz., Thomas Bain in Redcastle, and Murdoch Bain, his brother, in Brahan. There is a gravestone in the churchyard of Lochalsh having the effigy of a dead corpse cut upon it, which the said Ian Ciar quarried and carried down on his back from the braes of Kirkton. Part of Macleod's army, endeavouring to escape the general carnage, went into the church and shut themselves within, thinking themselves then safe, as in those times it was accounted sacrilege to meddle with anything within the walls of the church. However, this did not prevent one Duncan Matheson from setting the church on fire, from which action he got the name Dounchadh an Teampill. Mr Matheson, minister of Kilmuir and his nearest relatives are descendants of that Duncan. So was Murdoch Matheson, the bard. Macleod and the remains of his forces escaped with much difficulty, but this disaster did not discourage him from a second attempt on Matheson. Having raised more men, he set out on an expedition with a number of boats, and after landing at Fernaig, proceeded forward until he was met by Matheson at Sailfearna. There a battle ensued, in which Macleod's army was routed and himself killed.



Entrance to Loch Carron (heading to the right side of the body of water in the centre) looking north from near Fernaig

Part 2 next time

NB Most of the place-names in this manuscript have been located and placed on a 1:100 000 Ordnance Survey map of Lochalsh by former Chief Sir Torquhil Matheson, copies of which are available from the Society—A/Ed

A family history story

By Miriam Rimmer

Recently I was researching some of our Kennedy ancestors. Our great grandfather Alexander Matheson married Catherine Kennedy. This story is about the family of my third great grand uncle John Kennedy born in Kilmallie, Argyll, Scotland in 1797 and his wife Flora Maclachlan born in 1800 also in Kilmallie.

Among their twelve children there are six males, one of them is called Ewen baptised on Christmas day 1837 and another one is named Hugh (yet to find a birth but about 1835 determined from age at death). So we have Ewen and Hugh, two of the six sons.

From previous research I have a wife for Ewen of Ann Cameron. But I don't have a wife for Hugh. So I thought lets go see if we can find a wife for him. Fortunately a very kind person has added a death certificate on Ancestry for both Ewen and Hugh that lists different dates and places for the boys. From this I was able to determine that Ewen and Hugh were different people.

From the death record for Hugh I was also able to find a marriage for him, listed as Euphemia McIntyre. So I purchased the marriage record (From Scotlands People), in this marriage record we find that Hugh is listed as Ewen. Are you confused?? I am :-)

But everything else matches, his wife Euphemia and parents, also age at marriage. On Ancestry there is also a headstone for Hugh but is listed as Ewen. Yes, I'm really confused. So after trying to figure this all out I have come to the conclusion that at times, (depending on his mood, I suppose) Hugh called himself Ewen.

This might seem a simple exercise to some of you who are experienced researchers but my brain was suffering while trying to figure it all out. So after this little experience I began researching the family of one of my many cousins back in the 1800's. As I researched this family I discovered they had a second child born in 1849 in Kilmallie and I guess wanting to follow Scottish naming traditions of the time. Hugh is a family name but this child was a daughter so they named her Huina. Luckily there is only one of her!

Interesting to say the least!

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