



The Clan Matheson Society Australia Newsletter

From the (acting) Editor....

I apologise for this Newsletter being a little late. The International Newsletter is also rather late, so we're in good company! The International Newsletter is being distributed with this Newsletter, so you will have lots to read.

In this issue we have two stories, one from Janet Blainey about her niece, who was awarded an AM in the Australia Day honours, and about her mother who was awarded a British Empire Medal in 1970. The BEM was awarded, of course, long before we had an Australian honours system. Also in this issue, we have an article by Euan McGillivray who writes about his mother, grandmother and great grandmother, all of whom were Mathesons who married McGillivrays. There must be something about McGillivray men! Euan also writes about a book describing the shocking relationship between a significant part of Scottish prosperity and slavery in past centuries.

I have been looking into the origins of the History of the Mathesons book by Alexander MacKenzie and Alexander MacBain. In that book, the treatment of Sutherland Mathesons is quite brief, compared with the treatment given to Lochalsh Mathesons. My own Matheson heritage derives from the Sutherland branch and so I was naturally interested in why this should be so. MacBain, who prepared the second edition says he does not believe much of what MacKenzie wrote in the first edition about the origins of the Sutherland Mathesons and which is repeated (with caveat) in the second.

So the origins of the Sutherland (Shiness) Mathesons appear to be somewhat unclear. My own Y-chromosome has been classified as a 'Pictish' one, as opposed to Scottish, Anglo-Saxon or Viking ones that are common among Lochalsh Mathesons. In addition, it seems to have been derived from Colonel George Matheson of Shiness in the 17th century as is that of Mac C. Matheson who established the paper trail of descent. MacKenzie's account of 15-16th century Matheson history has two brothers separating, one going to establish the Sutherland Mathesons (including Colonel George Matheson), the other being an ancestor of the Lochalsh line. As the Lochalsh line seems to have a Viking Y-chromosome, this story appears not to be true. These times were so long ago that the stories are very hard to establish without access to DNA evidence. The presence of a Y-chromosome link establishes an unequivocal direct genetic link; absence of a Y-chromosome link could have a number of interpretations including an illicit relationship, document misinterpretation or adoption etc.

Thinking about all this led me to wonder where the manuscripts were that MacKenzie used to write his History. The first edition of 'The History of The Mathesons' began as a series of articles in the *Celtic Magazine* vol VII of 1882. One source was the Iomaire MS, written in 1834 by Roderick Matheson who lived at 'Iomaire', a property on the eastern side of Loch Carron about halfway between Stromeferry and Attadale, sometimes called 'Immer' or 'Imair' on old maps. The other source of these articles was the Bennetsfield MS, written by Captain John Matheson but published posthumously and edited by Kenneth Matheson. These articles were expanded to become the first edition of 'The History of The Mathesons'. Other material was available to Alexander MacBain for the 2nd edition and is described in the Appendix to the book. Late in the publication process for the 2nd edition of the book, a third MS, called the 'Tiree-Manchester' MS turned up—a collection of letters by Duncan Matheson to his cousin Alexander Matheson. Various other material owned then by James Matheson McBain was also used. The 'Iomaire' and 'Bennetsfield' MSS were published, but the whereabouts of the other material is not known to me.

Colin Matheson (acting) Editor

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CLAN MATHESON

Summary of virtual Meeting held by Zoom on 21st February 2021, 2pm

International Clan Gathering in USA in July this year was mentioned last meeting – it looks unlikely Australians will be able to travel overseas in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Genevieve advised the Society currently has \$7,095 in its account, which includes 16 payments of membership fees. Colin is to be added as signatory on the Society's account.

Colin thanked Brad for his many years' hard work on the original Society website. Website has been edited by Brenton Hayward and there will be further changes to hosting arrangements, establishing a new members' area etc. Discussion around members' area contents – should we be more open, or have much content restricted to members?

Some people on the Facebook page are showing interest in finding family links through Ancestry. These people might do well to look into the Matheson Family Tree DNA project as it is much more specific than Ancestry's more generic information; they could be pointed in the direction of the Matheson DNA project through our website. Nevertheless, there is value in the Autosomal DNA Testing done through ancestry.com.

There was discussion about using the website as a route for people to pay membership subscriptions and perhaps a merchandise shop.

Euan now has all the merchandise and has done a new inventory. How to market the merchandise – through the website? Calculation of postage? There is interest in T-shirts, despite there being none available at present. Need to take small steps initially to determine capacity to manage the quantity; and note that car decals and T-shirts might be popular merchandise items.

Clan archives are currently with Roma Jorgenson and include old documents concerning the history of the Society, editions of newsletters, Margaret Fleming's own history of the Society, as well as all other documents needed to fulfil our statutory record-keeping requirements. There is a need for some succession planning in relation to these archives and family tree information in both hard copy and electronic form. At some stage it could reside in the National Library or National Archives.

Next meeting 23 May 2021

CLAN MATHESON

Summary of virtual Meeting held by Zoom on 23rd May 2021, 2pm

Colin noted that he would contact past members about subscriptions, but not until after the August AGM, as there has been little activity due to Covid-19.

The website is still hosted at CrazyDomains, but now not under Brad's business umbrella. Discussion continued about a Members Only area, and what to keep behind such a portal e.g. constitutions, rules.

Agreed to continue to circulate the merchandise listing with the newsletters, and also put the catalogue on the website with Euan's contact details. Euan is willing to pack and post merchandise items ordered via either of these methods, and seek reimbursement from the Treasurer.

We note that the Ringwood Highland Games are scheduled to be held on 3 October at Eastfield Park, Croydon, Vic. Should we try to have a presence?

Bank Balance at 7 May 2021 was \$7,001.59 CR.

Annual General Meeting date August 29th

Australia Day Award: Sarah Matheson

We congratulate Sarah Matheson on her Order of Australia (AM) award in the latest Australia Day Awards. Janet Blainey writes:

In the Australia Day awards this year my niece, Sarah Louise Matheson, was awarded 'Member of the Order of Australia for significant services to the law, to intellectual property protection and to the not-for-profit sector.'

Sarah was born on 21st August 1968, the eldest grandchild of Frank and Marie Matheson and first child for my brother Peter Matheson and his wife Maggie Matheson. Sarah was educated in Bayside and went on to Melbourne University to study law. She is a senior partner at Allens law firm in Melbourne specialising in intellectual property law. Sarah recently served as the Reporter General at the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property (AIPPI). AIPPI is the world's leading not-for-profit association dedicated to the development and improvement of laws for the protection of intellectual property. The association is based in Zurich, Switzerland. Sarah is also Chair of the Victorian Ballet School.



Sarah Matheson and her Order of Australia (AM)

It turns out that Sarah is not the only member of her family to be awarded for community service. Sarah's grandmother was awarded a British Empire Medal in 1970 as Janet writes below:

Claudine Marie Stuart Matheson

She was born on 9th March 1909 and married my father Frank Douglas Matheson on 22nd December 1934 at St Andrews Church Brighton.

My mother began her community activities the following year and joined Red Cross and worked as a volunteer with Red Cross for the next 55 years. She began working in local kindergartens, progressing to schools, girl guides and community housing. Her great love was Red Cross and she held a number of different committee positions including Commandant but often as the Treasurer. She was known for her great capacity to raise funds (she drove a horse and cart around Brighton during the war collecting for the Opportunity Shops), attending any emergency in Victoria (bush fires,

hospital strikes and floods) and 'getting on with the job'. She was a good organiser and ran Meals on Wheels for 25 years in Brighton and later established TeleCross (a phone help service for home-bound people in Bayside). She was an excellent cook and provided catering services in bush fire emergencies on behalf of Red Cross. She received numerous awards through Red Cross including 40 years and 50 years of service. In 1970 she was awarded the British Empire Medal 'for long and dedicated community service in educational activities and to charitable organisations in the Brighton district'.

She remained active in her community until poor eyesight caught up with her in her 80s. She died in 1996.



These are pictures of Janet and her mother at Government House, Melbourne in 1970 for the investiture of Marie Matheson's BEM.

Scotland, Mathesons and me

By Euan McGillivray

During several visits to Scotland over the past decade, I have become more and more interested in two aspects of Scottish history. The first directly involves my ancestors, both Mathesons and McGillivrays. These two family names are enmeshed in my life because of the number of marriages that involved both families. My father married a Matheson, my grandfather married a Matheson, my great-great grandfather married a Matheson. This last marriage took place on the Isle of Skye in 1830, and these two, with six children, described by officials as in 'a destitute state', were 'cleared' from their home.

Over the past few years, I have become fascinated by the Scottish Highland Clearances. The British government, absent Highland chiefs and wealthy land owners attempted to make a virtue from displacing thousands of impoverished crofters from their homelands. Driving poverty-stricken families from their homes and social connections, would today be called 'tough love'. This was cast a necessary social exercise undertaken to provide for a new beginning in a British colony thousands of kilometres away from the Highlands. The truth of the matter is that the land occupied by people was more valuable to the land owners to graze sheep than support a well established farming culture. Money and power colluded to expel over 5,000 people from Skye alone by 1860. On the mainland, the Duke of Sutherland was exercising raw power in order to exchange people for livestock on his lands.



*My Great-great Grandmother,
Mary McGillivray, née Matheson*



*My Grandmother, Flora
McGillivray, née Matheson*



*My mother, Ina McGillivray, née
Matheson*



**Matheson headstones at the old
cemetery, Casterton, Vic**

(courtesy Carol Judkins)

The other aspect of Scottish history that grabbed my attention followed a visit to the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. The collections and exhibitions at the Museum reflect the deep and permanent impact the history of transatlantic slavery has had around the world. And the Scots were part of that story.



International Slavery
Museum, Liverpool,

In a second-hand book shop, I found a book edited by Prof.T.M. Devine from Edinburgh University, called *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past, The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

In the forward to the book, Philip D. Morgan says... 'if Scots think their country has few or no connections to slavery, they are sorely mistaken' Ten of the foremost scholars in the field 'systematically peel away the mythology'.

When I first visited Scotland and fell in love with the glens, lochs, pubs, pipes, and more, my understanding about Scottish history was about as deep as a biscuit tin. While I also love the Highlands and visiting my ancestral home, or what's left of it, on Skye, the real history of the place continues to unfold. The light and dark are there for us all to see.

Notes:

We note that the Ringwood Highland Games are scheduled to be held on 3 October at Eastfield Park, Croydon, Vic.

The next meeting of Clan Matheson will be on 29 August 2021, time and place TBA.

Colin Matheson (A/editor)

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