

Dugald George Matheson

By Alan McKenzie

Dugald George Matheson was born in 1888 the oldest son of John Matheson and Agnes Seay of Simons Pass in the McKenzie Country. The family's town house was *Ataahua* in Wai-iti Road, then in 1911 the larger Jacobean designed mansion *Tighnafeile* in Wai-iti Road. Mrs Matheson and family stayed in Timaru while the children attended school.

Dugald was a brilliant scholar being Dux of Waimataitai then Timaru Boys High School. He became a Doctor gaining the highest examination marks in New Zealand and first class honours in all subjects. He then worked in Rarotonga, Hokitika and Rotorua and served overseas on war service as a Captain in the New Zealand Medical corps in Egypt and France. He was discharged due to illness in 1917 and married Mary Lane of Sydney in the same year. They had one son, Donald Lane Matheson.

About 1920 Dugald retired from the medical profession to take up farming on Roseneath Station in the Waitaki Valley, near the present Aviemore Dam.

Besides farming they worked a small coalmine on the station on the banks of the Waitaki River. It provided lignite coal for the local district. On the 23 January 1930 the men were working in the underground mine when the sounds of creaking alerted them to possible danger so they left the mine. Meanwhile Mrs Matheson was preparing the men's afternoon tea and when it was 3 o'clock she took it into the mine. It was later reported that a cry was heard and the sound of the mine collapsing. Mrs Matheson was trapped. Help was sent for to the construction site of the Waitaki Dam and 100 men are said to have rushed to the scene. They had great difficulty in excavating a way to the accident area with debris falling before supporting timber could be got into place. When the body was recovered the next day it was found that Mrs Matheson probably died instantly as a timber beam had fallen and crushed her as the tunnel collapsed. She was 40 years old.

Her husband Dugald died in a car accident five years later in 1935. They are buried together in the Matheson family plot in the Timaru Cemetery.