

# Mangatoetoe's Wedding of the Decade

Reynold Macpherson, 5 February 2018\*



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Under the gentle gaze of Maungakawakawa, the Mangatoetoe Macphersons hosted the Haines-Eastwoods, plus family and friends, to a magnificent celebration. Early childhood educator and horsewoman Marcia Eastwood married 'Big Farmer' Gwillam Macpherson, after a decade of 'speerin and beukin' on both sides. The characters, settings and logistics were a cross between the Lord of the Rings and a Highland Games.

The Friday evening BBQ was more than a traditional Meet and Greet under a marquee. Children discovered the swimming pool, cricket pitch and mini golf. Teenagers adopted the outdoor hay-bale couches. Farmyard athletes sampled iced 'lemonade' from a cow trough and vied for bragging rights with gumboot throwing. Parents and grandparents delighted in the progress of each other's children and grandchildren.

MC John Wetherly, an ex-Canadian from Tauranga, convened an executive meeting at the bar to hear the lubricated pronouncement on the significance of the occasion, although the quality of their analyses deteriorated as the evening passed and drifted gradually into a happy, mumbled, sleepy exhaustion.



The crowd more than doubled to about 180 on Saturday. The surrounding valleys emptied into Mangatoetoe, with familiar faces from all parts of New Zealand, the Pacific, Australia and England. A shuttle service organized by the groom's brother Gwyn (Captain, Queen Alexandra's) transported everyone to the back of the farm, roading courtesy of the big-hearted Brian Kitchen.

There, in Middle Earth on the Pipiwai, the crowd was piped into a cathedral of young totara and old manuka on a peninsula picnic spot by Douglas Baukie, resplendent in Black Watch tartan. Little princes and princesses, in their very best, then terrified their parents by jostling over a wobbly one-way bridge to the 'Kids Island'. Somehow, no one fell in.

The bride made a dramatic arrival by helicopter, courtesy of Grant and Karen Parker. She swept over the peninsular, waving delightedly, to land and complete her entrance in Nick Laver's vintage Ford and on her brother Ben's arm. Her dress was simply stunning; a classical creation of embroidered lace over a cream satin base with a mermaid cut, set off by a long matching veil. She was demure and radiant. The children were silent and still, enthralled.

Shirley Tubbs, an Anglican minister from Kerikeri, wove a gentle and compelling ceremony around a profound idea; marriage is a sacred covenant between two people intended to nurture children and give deep meaning to life. Gwillam and Marcia responded with personal and moving vows. The groom's three-year-old nephew, Henry Macpherson, delivered the marriage rings with appropriate solemnity, and the union was blessed.

The groom's mother, Wendy Macpherson, came forward to 'pin the tartan', formally welcoming the bride to Clan Macpherson. The bride's mother, Sylvia Eastwood (née Haines), joined the wedding party for the signing of the register. Stuart Macpherson, the groom's brother, witnessed the signings in his best Australian bushman's hat.





Solemnities over, champagne and ‘lemonade’ were served to a barrage of photographs. Having done the rounds, the newly marrieds departed for yet more photographs and the marquee on the flat in Warren Gore’s vintage Chevrolet.

In Far North style, friends and relatives delivered a memorable feast. Roast pork and beef off the Home Farm and two of Jed Thomson’s sheep were carved by Darren Shanks. Kurt Timpe contributed raw fish Island-style in coconut cream. Bruce Christianson added smoked fish. Peter Macpherson, the groom’s brother, tabled smoked trout. A team led by ex-DOC Allen Norman delivered fresh fish and paua from Tapotupotu. Keith Tobin from Toby’s laid on a superb seafood display. The wedding cake was a triumph by Raewyn Crozier. Catering was coordinated by Debbie Allen. Tyneal Gore ran the bar with help from Page Beatson, Tori Norman and Maraea Waitane.

In Highland style, the happy couple’s families were introduced. The groom’s mother, Wendy, graciously indicated the Macphersons present. She started with Guy Macpherson’s first-born Douglas from Awanui and his wife Colleen, their twins Sharon and Natalie with husbands Allen and Darryl, and their grandchildren Carlos, Bailey, ‘AJ’, baby Brendon, Amelia and Jared. Next indicated were Reynold from Rotorua and his English wife Nicki, their children Kirsty, Shiona and Angus and their grandchildren; Austin, Olive and Ivy (Ewan with wife Romar and children Alex and Charlie sadly absent). Shiona’s Tasmanian husband Damian judged the paua cooked in cream to be “the best broccoli soup I have ever tasted”.

Guy's third son Peter was noted with his Scottish wife Vyvyan, with best wishes sent to their children Heather and Douglas who live in Edinburgh and Wales respectively with grandchildren Lily, Theo, Isla and Gethin. Fourth introduced was Stuart, the "good-looking one," and his Maltese-Australian wife Mary. Fifth indicated was Gwyn, whose wife Gemma is currently serving in Iraq, and their son Henry, Lord of the Rings for the day. Also present was Rosemary from Opotiki of the Honeymoon Valley Macphersons, and John and Karen representing the family of the much-respected Ken and Pat Macpherson.

The bride's brother, Ben Eastwood, introduced Sylvia's children and grandchildren present. Her first-born was Janine. Ben from Tahiti was second, with his partner Valerie Chong and their children Manuari and Arihau. Marcia the bride was third born. Her sister Cherie was fourth, with husband Jonathon and children Sophie and Katie also present. Vincent was the fifth and youngest.

A series of speakers then spoke directly about the virtues and foibles of the happy couple, with all children appropriately absent with a baby sitter. Gales of laughter swept the marquee as the couple were provided with ribald advice, enough to last a lifetime of 'productivity'. Ben Eastwood 'took the biscuit' with his customized version of John Legend's "All of Me", with opening words for his beloved sister; "What could I do without your smart mouth?"



Gwillam responded in his careful way with credits all round, honouring Ken Macpherson's contribution on the farm during WW2, and bravely noting Marcia's capacity to put the "oi into annoying". The bride simply smiled triumphantly, and led off the dancing with her husband, with a swing waltz. DJ Jeremy Smith dimmed the lights in favor of a technicolor display and soon had a floor full of dancers, some apparently refugees from Middle Earth. Many danced until about three when most memories faded.

The fulsome Sunday breakfast was not for the delicate. There were many late arrivals from the camping area. Breakfast segued into lunch and then into afternoon tea as more and more surfaced to reflect on reinforced relationships. Children headed for the pool, the golf or the bamboo to plan huts. When light showers swept down from Maungakawakawa, the hay-bale couches were whisked into the marquee to become a new play area.



The departing consensus was that the “wedding of the decade” had been the most restorative clan gathering since the Macpherson Reunion held 25-27 February 2011 and Gwyn and Gemma’s wedding on 19 December 2015. The sages suggested that the next should be the 100th Anniversary of the Macphersons acquiring the Home Farm, on 27 January 1928. It sounded vaguely like a plan.

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