



*Clan Matheson
Gathering
Duncraig Castle
August 1981*



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CEUD MILLE FAILTE

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you who attend this Gathering at Duncraig. It must be nearly two and a half centuries since the clan gathered in Lochalsh. In those far off days we gathered for raids and other war-like activities. In 1981 we are more concerned with clan history, reuniting dispersed families and finding the homesteads of our forebears long ago. Lochalsh may be the cradle of the clan, but branches dispersed to the Islands of Lewis and Skye, and northwards through Applecross and Gairloch to Sutherland; and finally throughout the English speaking world. Norway, too, has a strong branch of the clan dating from the early seventeenth century. To those of you from overseas I extend a particularly friendly welcome and I know that the indigenous Mathesons will take you to their hearts.

Torquhil Matheson of Matheson

PROGRAMME

(subject to variation)

MONDAY 3rd August

2.30pm onwards. Registration, and sale of tickets for Clan Dinner and Buffet Supper (these may be booked in advance, but *not* bought at the door).

Genealogy and other exhibitions will be on view throughout the Gathering and it is hoped also to provide a buffet and bar.

6.30pm. Buffet Supper

TUESDAY 4th August

11.30am. Church Service at Kirkton of Lochalsh (bus from Duncraig).

2.30pm. March to Clan Gathering Place – Dai! Acha-da-Thearnaidh (near Loch Achahninich) – weather permitting.

7.00pm. Clan Dinner. Ticket holders only.

WEDNESDAY 5th August

10.30am. Clan Society Meeting. To be followed for the rest of the day by some interesting talks, and some excellent films lent to us by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

7.30pm. Ceilidh. Refreshments available.

THURSDAY 6th August

10.00am. Piping Competition.

11.00am. Tug o' War (possibly Scotland versus the Rest!)

12.00 noon. Exhibitions close.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Organizers of the Gathering would like to express their gratitude to the Highland Region Education Authority for allowing us to hold it in Duncraig Castle, and to Mr McGhie for all he is doing to make it a success. Also, to the Royal Bank of Scotland for the loan of their films. They are most grateful to all the contributors to the Programme, and to those who have supported it with their advertisements, and not least to Mr D. B. Picton-Phillips and the printers for all their help and advice, and to the *Aberdeen Press & Journal* and *Stornoway Gazette & Herald* for permission to reproduce photographs on pages 4, 8 and 9.

**CO DHÀ BHIOS MACMHATHAIN GU MATH,
MAR BI E DHA FHÉIN.**

To whom will Matheson be good, if not to himself.

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Eilean Donnan Castle and the Mathesons

by William Matheson

It could be said that Eilean Donnan Castle and the Clan Matheson are about the same age. Expert opinion has it that the castle (blown up in 1719 and restored in 1932) was built in the thirteenth century, while Coinneach son of Mathan, identified as founder of the Matheson and MacKenzie clans, appears on record in 1264. It has even been alleged that he it was who had the commission to build the castle, of which he may have become custodian as deputy for the Earl of Ross.

Another Coinneach or Kenneth, presumably a descendant, was keeper of Eilean Donnan two generations later. Unfortunately for him, he was on the losing side in the national struggle between the Comyns and the Balliols on the one part and the Bruces on the other. The day of reckoning came in 1331, when the castle was besieged and taken. Many of the garrison were executed, and Thomas Randolph, nephew of King Robert Bruce and Guardian of Scotland, arrived on the scene to see their heads displayed on its walls. Kenneth himself, after a long imprisonment, suffered the same fate at Inverness in 1346.

For some time the fortunes of Kenneth's descendants were at a low ebb, but the tide turned for them with the death of David II, last of the royal Bruces, in 1371. Thereafter they steadily made good their losses, and eventually, led by the house of Seaforth, they achieved territorial power to rival that of their early masters, the Earls of Ross. But that is another story; suffice it here to say that their success was founded upon opposition to the MacDonald Lords of the Isles and support for the Crown. And it was apparently in this political context that the Mathesons broke away to form a separate clan from the MacKenzies, pursuing the opposite policy of adherence to the MacDonalds.

However, that policy had to be reviewed after the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493, and the Mathesons became a divided clan, one faction still choosing association with the MacDonalds, but others throwing in their lot with the MacKenzies, now restored to possession of Eilean Donnan. And so it was that, in 1539, when the MacDonalds laid siege to the castle, two leading Mathesons were found in opposing camps: John Matheson (Iain Dubh) inside in charge of its defence, and Murdoch Matheson (Murchadh Buidhe), later to become undisputed chief of the clan, outside among those investing it. The siege was raised, but only after the two opposing leaders, John Matheson and Donald MacDonald of Sleat, had lost their lives.

John Matheson must be reckoned one of the great warriors of the clan. On at least two occasions he was victorious in battle when the MacLeods of Lewis invaded Lochalsh; and it was no doubt his outstanding soldierly qualities that led to his appointment as Constable of Eilean Donnan. This was not an hereditary office, by the way, as so often claimed on behalf of the Clan MacRae. At various times the charge was entrusted to members of other clans, such as the MacLennans and the Murchisons; though not to any Mathesons other than Iain Dubh, so far as known. But his defence against the MacDonalds in 1539 remains one of the most dramatic episodes in the story of Eilean Donnan.



A BRIEF NOTE
BY THE CHIEF ON

Duncraig Castle

BUILT FOR

SIR ALEXANDER MATHESON, BART., M.P.

“26 July 1865.

Alexr. discovered Craig as a site for our new house.

27 July.

I drove with Alexr., Ross and Finlayson [from Balmacara House] to Ploctown, whence in a boat to Craig, a beautiful wooded spot and we decided to build.”



Eleanor Irving Perceval
3rd Wife of Alexander Matheson, M.P.

These are the entries in my grandmother's diaries which announce the advent of Duncraig, built to replace their house at Inverinate, which was burnt to the ground whilst they were in residence at 1.00am on 10 September 1864.

Duncraig became a favourite home with their many children, particularly my father, who revelled in the boating and fishing opportunities afforded by Loch Carron. Even my brother Fergus and myself were lucky enough to spend a summer holiday under its roof in 1935, when we, too, became immersed in the pursuits of the previous generation.

I have in my possession the daily 'Dinner Book' for the 1870s and 1880s, and when in residence the following is an example of how many people were catered for daily—

1 Jan 1873. Dining Room	Visitors	3	
	Family	3	
Nursery	Grown Persons	7	
	Children	7	
Hall	Strangers	5	
	Servants	18	Total 43

My grandfather died in 1886, since when Duncraig has had a varied existence. For many years it was let for the season to fashionable hosts and hostesses for summer house parties. It changed ownership on various occasions and the last private owner was Sir Daniel Hamilton. During the 1939–45 war it became a Royal Naval Hospital. On the death of Lady Hamilton, Duncraig was given to the Ross-shire County Council, and since then has been a Domestic Science School for Highland girls.

CAPE BRETON, 1979



S/Sgt Angus Matheson, R.C.M.P.



THE MATHESON TARTANS

by Dr. Micheil MacDonald, F.S.A. Scot.

The Scottish Tartans Society is the official body for recording and distributing information on tartans and highland dress. Inaugurated by the Lord Lyon King of Arms in 1963, the Society has been sited in Comrie, Perthshire since 1976 and with its award-winning museum attracts visitors from all over the world.

In its records of every known tartan the Society has six Matheson 'setts' on record. They date from 1805–1977. The earliest of these survives as a small piece in the archives of the Society. We are informed that it was used by Sir Alexander of Ardross and Lochalsh (1805–86) for his servants. This may well be so, but there is also a specimen in the MacBean collection in Inverness labelled 'Matheson – ancient Camissary' (said to be from Camasunary – Skye) which is the same sett with the red changed to maroon. (Thread count 1)

In 1850 the brothers William and Andrew Smith of Mauchline in Scotland published their *Authenticated Tartans of the Clans and Families of Scotland* and here we find the predominately red, Matheson tartan usually worn today. This sett has been repeated in several subsequent works and has given rise to several variations. (2)

A pattern consisting of only part of the normal Matheson sett appears in McIntyre Norths' book *The Book of the Club of the True Highlanders* 1881. North obtained this sett from James Logan, author of *The Scottish Gael* 1831, and depending on how long it had been known to Logan it may well pre-date the Matheson tartan worn today. This sett has an internal balance of design lacking in the pattern of 1850. (3)

A sett that would appear to have escaped attention until recently has come to light in the research of the late MacGregor-Hastie on the collection of the Highland Society of London (c1810–30) It is clearly based on the tartan shown by the Smith brothers, but the green is substituted for red, and blue for green in only one section. (4)

The normally-accepted hunting sett follows the patterns of numbers two and three closely, only substituting blue for red and black for blue (5). There is also a more recent version of the hunting Matheson which was received from Messrs Kinloch Anderson in 1977. It may be one of the recent 'rush' of new fashion tartans and is merely a variation on the established hunting sett. (6)

(1) Green 16, maroon 8, green 4, maroon 4, green 4, maroon 94, blue 18, green 8, maroon 4, green 4, maroon 4, green 8, maroon 14, green 4, maroon 4, green 4, maroon 8, blue 14, green 14, maroon 6, green 12.

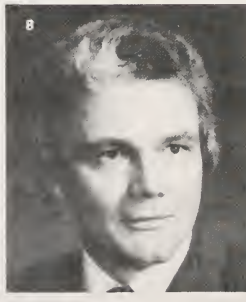
(2) Green 16, red 8, green 2, red 2, green 2, red 48, blue 16, green 8, red 2, green 2, red 2, green 8, red 16, green 2, red 2, green 2, red 2, blue 16, green 16, red 4, green 8.

(3) Red 4, green 4, red 24, green 20, red 4, green 4, red 4, green 20, azure 6, blue 20, red 24, green 4, red 4.

(4) Blue 8, green 4, blue 2, green 4, blue 2, green 44, blue 12, green 4, red 4, green 4, red 4, green 4, red 8, green 4, red 4, green 4, red 4, blue 12, green 8, red 4, green 8.

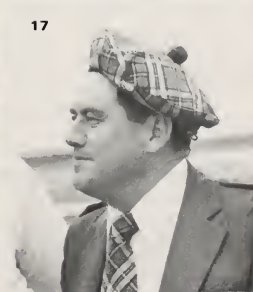
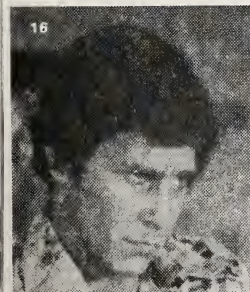
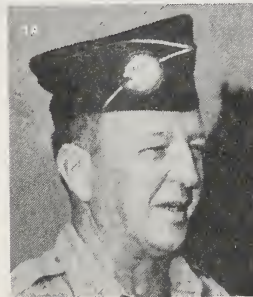
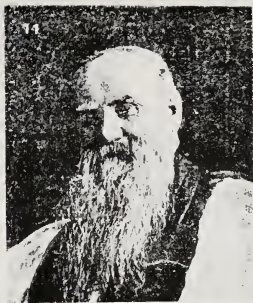
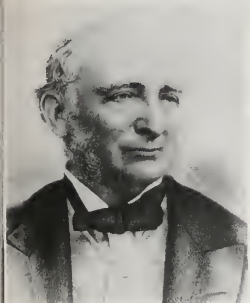
(5) Yellow 14, blue 6, yellow 4, blue 4, yellow 4, blue 60, black 18, yellow 6, blue 4, yellow 4, blue 4, yellow 6, blue 10, yellow 4, blue 4, yellow 4, blue 4, black 18, yellow 10, blue 6, yellow 8.

(6) Green 15, blue 8, green 2, blue 2, green 2, blue 48, black 16, green 8, blue 2, green 2, blue 2, green 8, blue 16, green 2, blue 2, green 2, blue 2, black 16, green 16, blue 4, green 8.



(1) Donald Matheson of Shiness (1745-1810) Captain in the Sutherland Fencibles. (2) Sir James Matheson, Bart., M.P. (1796-1878) Co-founder of Jardine-Matheson & Co. Builder of Lews Castle, Stornoway. (3) The Rev. Dr. George Matheson, D.D. (1842-1906) wrote the hymn 'Oh, Love that will not let me go'. (4) Donald Alexander Matheson (1860-1935) civil engineer and railroad magnate, initiated Gleneagles Hotel and Golf Courses. (5) General Sir Torquhil Matheson, Bart., K.C.B., C.M.G. (1871-1963) G.O.C. in C. Western Command, India 1931-5. (6) The late Premier Alex Matheson, of Prince Edward Island. (7) The Rev. Dr. James Matheson, D.D. Moderator of the Church of Scotland 1975-6. (8) The Hon. Joel Matheson, Minister of Finance, Government of

MATHESONS



Nova Scotia. (9) Ex-Provost Sandy Matheson of Stornoway. (10) Sir Alexander Matheson, Bart., M.P. (1805-86) moved Jardine-Matheson to Hong Kong, builder of Duncraig and Ardross Castles. (11) His Grace Archbishop Samuel Matheson (1852-1942) Primate of All Canada 1909-31. (12) Dr. Kenneth G. Matheson (1864-1931) President of Drexel Institute 1922-31. (13) The Late Alastair Matheson, Gaelic Singer, Mod. Gold Medallist. (14) Major-General S. H. Matheson, Late Commanding General Fort Campbell, Kentucky. (15) His Honour Judge John Matheson, C.D., Kt. of St. John, designed the Canadian Flag. (16) Tim Matheson, Film Star. (17) His Honour Judge Lewis Matheson, Cape Breton. (18) Hugh Matheson, Olympic Oarsman, Winner of Diamond Sculls.



M.V. *Clan Matheson*, built 1957, Greenall Dockyard Co. Ltd., sold 1979 for demolition. Traded UK/Continent to East and South Africa/Indian continent. Owned by Clan Line Steamers Ltd., last at British and Commonwealth Shipping Co. Ltd.

From Martin – Wester Isles of Scotland (c.1695)

Every heir or young chieftain of a tribe was obliged in honour to give a public specimen of his valour before he was owned and declared governor or leader of his people, who obeyed and followed him upon all occasions.

This chieftain was usually attended with a retinue of young men of quality, who had not beforehand given any proof of their valour, and were ambitious of such an opportunity to signalize themselves.

It was usual for the captain to lead them, to make a desperate incursion upon some neighbour or other that they were in feud with; and they were obliged to bring by open force the cattle they found in the lands they attacked, or to die in the attempt.

After the performance of this achievement, the young chieftain was ever after reputed valiant and worthy of government, and such as were of his retinue acquired the like reputation. This custom being reciprocally used among them, was not reputed robbery; for the damage which one tribe sustained by this essay of the chieftain of another, was repaired when their chieftain came in his turn to make his specimen: but I have not heard an instance of this practice for these sixty years past.

(Martin was born and brought up in Skye, but wrote his book in London for the English.)

From Pennant's Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772

July 16th. Land at a point called the Kyle, or Passage, where about four-score horses were collected to be transported 'a la nage' to the opposite shore, about a mile distant. They were taken over by fours, by little boats, a pair on each side held with halters by two

men, after being forced off a rock into the sea. We undertook the conveyance of a pair. One, a pretty grey horse, swam admirably; the other was dragged along like a log; but as soon as it arrived within scent of its companions before landed, revived, disengaged itself, and took to the shore with great alacrity.

The horned cattle of Skie (*sic*) are swam over, at the narrow passage of Kul-Ri (Kyle Rhea), at low water; six, eight, or twelve are passed over at a time, tied with ropes, fastened from the horn of one to its tail, so to the next; the first is fastened to a boat, and thus are conveyed to the opposite shore. This is the great pass into the island, but is destitute even of a horse ferry.

From Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides in 1773

We proceeded to Fort George. When we came into the square, I sent a soldier with the letter to Mr Ferne. He came to us immediately, and along with him came Major Brewse of the Engineers, pronounced Bruce. He said he believed it was originally the same Norman with Bruce. That he had dined at a house in London, where were three Bruces, one of the Irish line, one of the Scottish line, and himself of the English line. He said he was shown it in the Herald's Office spelt fourtine different ways. I told him the different spellings of my name. Dr Johnson observed, that there had been great disputes about the spelling of Shakspeare's name; at last it was thought it would be settled by looking at the original copy of his will; but, upon examining it, he was found to have written it himself no less than three different ways. (Plus ça change! S.M.)

Bleak Caledonia's hills are bare,
And barren are her plains,
Bare-legged are her daughters fair,
Bare-bottom'd are her swains.
(attributed to Dr Johnson)

CLAN MATHESON SOCIETY

Membership of the Society is invited from those named Matheson or descended from a Matheson. For information please contact one of the following:

Edmond J. M. Matheson
1 Braehead Drive
Carnoustie DD7 7SX
Scotland

Mrs Jean M. Fries
11 West Greyer Lane
St. Louis, Missouri
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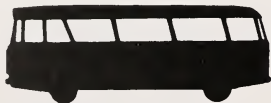
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Sir James Matheson, Bart, born at Lairg, Sutherland, 17th November, 1796, died in Mentone, 31st December, 1878. Partner in Jardine, Matheson & Co. 1832-1842. M.P. for Ashburton in 1843-1847 and for Ross and Cromarty until 1862.

In 1832 James Matheson, an independent merchant, who had established himself in Canton as an agent for various firms in India, joined forces with Doctor William Jardine, a former Ship's Surgeon in the East India Company. From this partnership emerged the Hong Kong based international trading company, Jardine, Matheson & Co., Ltd., whose breadth and depth of experience of Asian and Pacific

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These interests extend outside Asian and Pacific areas and encompass North America, Australasia, Southern Africa, the Middle East and also London, where Matheson & Co., Ltd. was established by Alexander Matheson and Andrew Jardine in 1848.

Matheson & Co., Ltd., whose offices are still at 3 Lombard Street in the City of London, now employs approximately 2,000 people in the UK. Its activities include insurance and insurance broking, shipping, forwarding and airfreighting, travel, banking and property ownership as well as representing the Jardine Matheson Group in the UK and Europe.



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