

# Clan Matheson New Zealand

## Chair's corner

Beannachdan dhuibh

The Clan Matheson international gathering 2024 gave me a deeper connection with my Matheson heritage, a love of the Scottish land in spring, a delight in seeing Gaelic signs —even in the supermarket — and joy in getting to know some wonderful Mathesons. I was proud to carry the Clan Matheson New Zealand banner in Scotland.

The activities the Chief of Clan Matheson organised strengthened the relationships among our group. As you will read in this newsletter, together we marched to the pipes, jostled to line up in photos, picnicked in the chief's cousin's beautiful garden, stomped over heather way up a hill to get the best view of the Hebrides and have another picnic, partied with BYO drinks and played rounders at a site known only to the locals. All these simple pleasures also involved the chief and his family, right down to the little toddlers.

And always we talked about our ancestors who had left their Matheson relatives long ago and about our Matheson families today living so far from Scotland. For me these conversations helped me reflect on Clan Matheson New Zealand and its support for our Mathesons.

I look forward to meeting Kiwi Mathesons at Highland game events this summer and hearing more about our Matheson ancestors and our Matheson families of today. Details are on page 11 of this newsletter.

The Clan Matheson New Zealand annual plan for 2024–2025 has been adopted and is available [here](#). You are most welcome to let me know your thoughts about how we can be most effective now and into the future. Also, if you or a member of your family can help with any activities it would be great to have you on board. Ideas for your involvement are [here](#).

I am looking forward to 2025 when our chief, Sir Alexander Matheson, visits New Zealand. I do hope you can come and meet him together with other Kiwi Mathesons at one of the planned events. Details are on pages 2 and 11.

Lena Orum  
Chair, Clan Matheson New Zealand branch  
[chair@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:chair@clanmatheson.org.nz)

Newsletter of the  
New Zealand branch of the  
Clan Matheson Society

September 2024

Issue 176

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Editor: Andrew Matheson  
[news@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:news@clanmatheson.org.nz)



# Visit of Chief of Clan Matheson

Next year will see more international Matheson connections. Hot on the heels of the international gathering in Scotland this past July, the Chief of Clan Matheson, Sir Alexander Matheson, and his wife Katharine (Lady Matheson) will be visiting New Zealand.

This is a private visit but they will be taking part in three Clan Matheson events. You're welcome at any of these, and we encourage you to mark the date of any in your area and make plans to take part in our informal events.

- Dunedin, Wednesday 29 January.
- [Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo](#), Saturday 8 February.
- Waipu, Sunday 9 February.

There's more information on page 11, and we'll add further details on our website [events page](#) and [Facebook group](#).



Lieutenant Colonel Sir Alexander Fergus Matheson of Matheson, 8th Baronet of Lochalsh and 28th Chief of the Clan, succeeded to the baronetcy and to the chiefship on the death of his father Sir Fergus Matheson in 2017.

Sir Alexander served as an officer in the Coldstream Guards from 1973 – 2001 in the UK and on many overseas postings.

He headed the British Schools Exploring Society before becoming Secretary of the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood at St James's Palace. He has served in the Royal Household as a Gentleman Usher and Extra Equerry to HM Queen Elizabeth II and to HM King Charles III.

Alexander and Katharine divide their time between Berkshire and the Isle of Skye, and have three married children: Andrew, Archie and Louisa, and five grandchildren.



**Clan Matheson New Zealand**

[www.clanmatheson.org.nz](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz)

[www.facebook.com/groups/  
ClanMathesonNewZealand](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ClanMathesonNewZealand)



**Clan Matheson New Zealand**

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# Clan Matheson international gathering 2024

Mathesons from around the world got together in July for four days of activities in a beautiful area of Scotland. The gathering was short on pomp and clan formalities and strong on having fun and meeting fine people from different countries who share a common bond and interest.

New Zealand's flag was waved — literally — by Andrew Matheson (Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand, Clan Matheson) and Lena Orum (Chair, Clan Matheson New Zealand), and they recount their experiences here.

## The gathering

People who share an interest in their Matheson heritage have been meeting at international gatherings for decades, but it has been 10 years since the clan's last formal international gathering given the last planned event in the USA was scuttled (twice) by covid restrictions.

The gathering was in two parts. First we were based in the Highlands around the Lochcarron and Lochalsh area, which is Matheson country. We then travelled 'over the sea to Skye', to enjoy another couple of days based on that beautiful island.

We experienced all that a Scottish summer has to offer, with single-digit temperatures, mist and rain changing slowly to hot and sunny weather. The midges had a good taste of us! But even the initial inclement weather couldn't dampen everyone's enthusiasm for the event.

## A varied programme

The gathering kicked off with Clan Matheson featuring at the Lochcarron Highland Games, held on the Attadale estate. We looked at heritage sites with Matheson connections and did some clan business, but most of all we just enjoyed good company as we explored beautiful parts of Scotland. Walking, taking a boat ride, having picnics and even a mass version of the ball game rounders were all on the menu.

You can read more about what we did in the following articles.

## What it's all about

The heritage sites were fascinating and the scenery magnificent, but our abiding memory is of the people we met. They're a fine bunch, these Mathesons! We really appreciated meeting and getting to know people from different countries, people of varied backgrounds but who all share a common interest in their Matheson heritage.



*Andrew and Lena braving the wild Scottish weather*

## More please!

There was a consensus that having a gathering every five years was the right balance between meeting regularly while maintaining interest and participation, especially by those who have to travel long distances. Ideally the gatherings would alternate between Scotland and another country, provided a Clan Matheson branch was willing and able to organise the event.

# Lochcarron Highland games

What better way to start an international clan gathering than with some Highland games, and we kicked off our gathering by taking part in the Lochcarron Highland Games.

This event is part of the formal Highland games circuit and a member of the Royal Scottish Highland Games Association, but has a unique style. It's small and very local, with an atmosphere rather like that of a community sports day. It raises money for groups in the area, from rowers to quilters, drama groups to playgroups, and a cancer support charity and local leisure facilities.



*The chief's son-in-law Archer Montagu-Pollock and great nephew Attie Cooper completing the gruelling hill race in dismal conditions*

Clan Matheson featured prominently on the day, with about 100 Clan Matheson members from around the world being piped onto the field at the start of the event. The Clan Matheson tent was a hive of activity throughout the day as people arrived for the gathering and met friends new and old.

Mathesons took part in several competition events, including track races, hammer-throwing and the infamous hill race.

It's fair to say that the weather was miserable, but the day was fun.

*Photographs of the Lochcarron Highland Games courtesy of Rob Wilkinson/BobTeddy Images.*

The games are held on the large Attadale estate: 12,000 hectares devoted to farming, forestry, deer, fishing and tourism. The estate was originally part of Clan Matheson lands, and the main house was built for a Matheson.

# Matheson heritage sites

Because the Lochalsh and Lochcarron area is 'Matheson country', there were plenty of sites of interest that we visited in a caravan of cars, by foot and even from a boat on a loch.

Our posse navigated narrow Highland roads with precision thanks to the ingenious what3words app, which divides the world into 3-metre squares that are individually (and imaginatively) named. So, for instance, from [///crumple.bottle.newsprint](#) we could easily rendezvous for a picnic at [///magical.unlimited.warblers](#).

In the area we saw the grand Duncraig Castle, built for Sir Alexander Matheson (1st Baronet of Lochalsh and great-grandfather of the current chief, Sir Alexander Matheson) and glimpsed Duirinish Lodge, a 1930s house built for Torquhil George Matheson and Lady Matheson, grandparents of the current chief.



*Suitably attired for a stop on our Highland jaunt*



*The chief, Sir Alexander Matheson, at Kirkton cemetery*



*Mathesons from around the world picnicking at Duirinish*

Kirkton cemetery is home to the graves of many Mathesons including Torquhil and Serena, uncle and aunt of the current chief and known to many New Zealand clan members.

There were plenty of pleasant mountain or coastal walks to choose from, and a guided walk around Duirinish, where Torquhil and Serena had a holiday home and where their daughter Nell lives today. Morag (née Matheson) was the guide and knew the story behind every house in the village.

# Clan business

Mathesons getting together from around the world was a great opportunity to share some experiences and ideas about what being part of Clan Matheson means today.

There were two forums for this. The clan council consists of the chief and his chief's lieutenants in each country where there is a branch of Clan Matheson. We swapped notes from each country and talked about issues facing us all: maintaining membership or participation, what types of events people are interested in taking part in, and communication channels such as websites, newsletters and social media.

We also talked about the frequency of our international gatherings, concluding that every five years is about right, with the potential to alternate between Scotland and another country if a branch is ready and able to host a gathering.



*New Zealand chief's lieutenant, Andrew Matheson, with the chief Sir Alexander Matheson*



One practical outcome of the council's discussions was to source high-resolution images of Matheson tartans so there is consistent and high-quality Matheson branding around the world. You can see the change of tartan image in this newsletter and on our [website](#) and [Facebook group](#).

The clan council also laid the ground for the next day's clan parliament, which was open for anyone at the gathering to attend. We heard updates from each branch and swapped notes on the challenges we were all facing, for instance on engagement and participation, particularly with younger people, and the use of social media.

# Having fun together

Above all, the gathering was an opportunity to enjoy a spectacular part of the world with a group of like-minded people.

We went on walks to spectacular sites by lochs and on the Isle of Skye. We saw ruins of crofters' houses and learnt about the difficult land our ancestors scraped a living from. A boat trip on a loch took us to see seals and other wildlife, and we even had a surprise choral rendition by the crew, one of whom was a Matheson descendant from Plockton.

People had lots of choices of things to do on their own or with others, including visits to traditional weavers and an impressive house and gardens. Some managed to slip in a visit to a whisky distillery or two.

One picnic was followed by a game of rounders, with large teams, creative and flexible rules and no-one really keeping the score. It was a lot of fun.



There was an evening get together in the historic Portree 'gathering hall' and farewell drinks on the final night.

These low-key and informal activities created opportunities to share deeper questions about family: what Matheson heritage means to people, and what family history interests they have. The common purpose of the gathering gave us the licence to talk more meaningfully than about the weather, and together investigating our past was a foundation for thinking about our future.



The gathering was also a great opportunity to get to know the Chief of Clan Matheson and his wife, Alexander and Katharine, their children, in-laws, grandchildren and other relatives.

# An unusual Matheson family tree

Your Matheson ancestry doesn't go back as far as you might think if you're descended from a Feilding watchmaker or one of his brothers. Or does it?

It's fairly well known that because of anti-German sentiment during the First World War the British royal family changed its name from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to the present name of Windsor. What's less well known is that some of the king's loyal subjects in New Zealand followed suit.

Five Schwartz brothers sought and were granted permission to change their surname to Matheson. Why would they choose that name?

It's likely there was a family connection somehow, and indeed there was according to family trees online. The brothers were among 11 children of Augustus Jens Emil Schwartz (born in Denmark) and Maria Catherine Elizabeth Freiberg (born in Lübeck, Germany). The Matheson connection comes from Augustus's Danish parents: Carl Augustus Schwartz and Mette Maria Mathiesen.

So if you do have one of these Schwartz brothers as an ancestor, your lineage goes back to Mette and her Danish forebears.

One brother, Frederick, didn't change his surname. Another, William John Augustus Schwartz, took the Mathieson spelling. This is another example of how it pays not to be hung up on the 'correct' spelling of the surname. In fact neither Matheson nor Mathieson is the spelling this new surname was derived from.

Although William was born in New Zealand, served in the territorial forces in the early years of the 20th century and was described as being "an excellent character", the Anti-German League named him during the First World War in a list of "allegedly German individuals ... included in the New Zealand Defence Forces or otherwise treated with favour by the government".

The patriarch of the New Zealand family, Augustus Schwartz, was an architect and builder who rose to be the Inspector of Public Works for Canterbury. He was heavily involved in lodge and church affairs in Christchurch before his death in 1916.

PUBLIC NOTICE.

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CHANGE OF SURNAME, SCHWARTZ  
TO MATHESON.

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**I**, PETER ARNOLD ADOLPHUS SCHWARTZ, of New Plymouth, in company with my four brothers, resident in Christchurch and Feilding, following the example set by his Majesty the King, and pursuant to the provisions of the War Regulations, have been granted permission to such change of surname by the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs.

PETER A. MATHESON,  
Buller Street, New Plymouth.

*Taranaki Herald*  
22 June 1918

PUBLIC NOTICE.

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CHANGE OF SURNAME.  
SCHWARTZ TO MATHESON.

**I**, ALBERT ERNEST SCHWARTZ, Watchmaker and Jeweller, of Feilding, following the example set by His Majesty the King, and pursuant to the Provisions of the War Regulations, have hereby been given consent to such change of name by the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs.

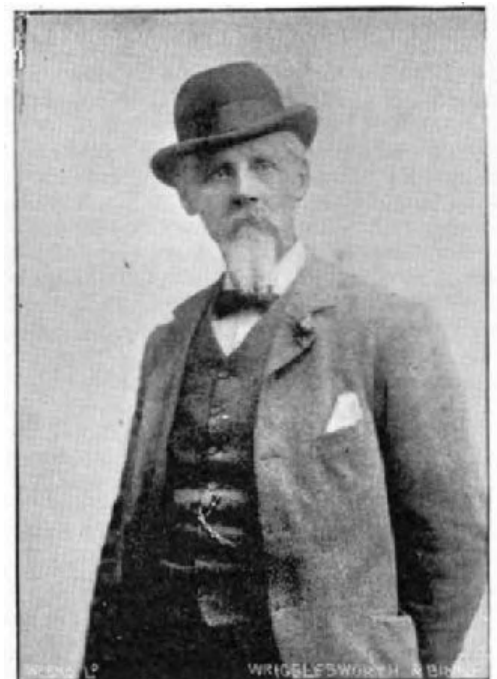
(Signed) A. E. MATHESON,  
Watchmaker and Jeweller,  
Feilding.

June 19, 1918.

*Feilding Star 28 June 1918*

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**HIGH-CLASS WATCHMAKING**  
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A. E. SCHWARTZ,  
Practical Watchmaker and Jeweller.  
Fergusson Street, FEILDING.  
A Nice Assortment of  
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*Feilding Star 15 May 1918*



*Wrigglesworth and Binns, photo.*  
**MR. A. SCHWARTZ.**

*Augustus Schwartz*  
(from the [Cyclopedia of New Zealand](#), 1903)

# Family history research — censuses

by Andrew Matheson

Censuses — they've been around for a while. The first one in the Roman world is remembered for causing Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, but the Babylonians were conducting them about 4,000 years before that. The first known Chinese one was more than 2,000 years ago.

The early censuses collected information only in aggregate, and in fact the word comes from the Latin verb 'to estimate'. For a census to be useful to family historians it has to identify individuals, so we can't go back that far. Recent census records aren't available because of privacy restrictions on the release of individuals' information.

So there is a range of about 80 years in many countries (100 years in the USA) where censuses are most valuable. And they are like gold — absolutely key to unlocking your family connections.

## New Zealand

Our normal advice for researching your family tree is to start with what you know and work backwards. That doesn't apply for census information, though.

The first New Zealand census was in 1858 and they've been held regularly since, but that's no use to you. All returns before 1966 were destroyed after aggregate information had been extracted. There are a few exceptions for records of Māori people from 1891 and 1911, which are on microfilm at [FamilySearch libraries](#). Records after 1966 will be released after 100 years, so you'll have to wait a while to see them.

## Scotland

There has been a census in Scotland every 10 years since 1801, with the exception of 1941 because of the Second World War and 2021 when the census was delayed a year because of covid precautions.

There is little surviving information about any individuals from 1801 to 1831, but from 1841 things get really interesting.

From 1841 to 1921 enumerators copied information from schedules completed by heads of households and of smaller institutions into enumeration books for each district. The original schedules have been destroyed but the enumeration books retained. The records are indexed by personal name and are available as digital images on [ScotlandsPeople](#) for a modest charge. Census up to 1921 are available to view.

The information collected at each census varied over time and generally became more detailed. Note particularly that in the 1841 census the age of people over 15 was mostly rounded down to the nearest 5 years. ScotlandsPeople has [advice](#) on to how to use and understand Scottish census records.

You might get lucky with censuses taken before 1841, and National Records of Scotland has a useful [guide](#) to them.

Angus Matheson	Head	28	Scotlar	Do. do. do.
Catherine	Wife	27	Do.	Do. do. do.
Mary	Daughter	7	Do.	Do. do. do.

Part of an 1851 Scottish census enumeration sheet showing the entry for Angus Matheson, his wife Catherine and their daughter. By looking at the whole sheet you can find out the area they lived in and where they were born (the ditto marks to the right)

## ... Family history research — censuses

It's not only in official records that you can find pre-1841 censuses. I'm lucky because my early Matheson ancestors lived in Assynt, a parish in Sutherland. [Malcolm Bangor-Jones](#) is a family historian with a special knowledge of the area, and one of his publications is *Population lists of Assynt 1638–1811*.

My ancestors were from the tiny settlement of Baddidaroch, and the 1811 census lists Kathrine Matheson and widow of Hugh Matheson among the 11 household heads in "Baddydarach".

In the 1774 population list there are only six households at "Baddy-darroch" and Hugh Matheson is listed alone nearby at "Little Baddydarroch" with his wife, two children and one servant.

These nuggets have helped me trace my Matheson ancestors back, with some speculation about relationships, prior to the 1841 census. The illustration shows how difficult it must have been to transcribe those early entries, so it's really useful to have someone with Malcolm's experience to do all the work.

The Bony House		5	11	11	7	1	3	19	2
John Capt. Matheson	1	1							
Widow M. Matheson	1	1							
Margt. Matheson	1	1							
John Matheson	1	1							
George Matheson Dow	1	1							
Thomas Matheson	1	1							
Ruth Matheson	1	1							
Baddydaroch		7	7		1		6	12	7
Ruth Matheson	1	1							
Angus Matheson	1	1							
Donald Matheson	1	1							
Kath. Matheson	1	1							
John Wilson	1	1							
Barbra Matheson	1	1							
Alex. Matheson	1	1							
John Ross	1	1							
Margt. Matheson	1	1							
Barbra Campbell	1	1							
Inverkergh		1	1		9		2	2	2
John Matheson	1	1							
Norman Wilson	1	1							
Kinloch		2	2		2		7	1	
Angus Matheson	1	1							
Ruth Ross	1	1							
Haan		3	3		3		9		
Margt. Matheson	1	1							
George Matheson	1	1							
John Matheson	1	1							
John Matheson	1	1							

### Other countries

It's likely that your Scottish ancestors migrated to other countries, or even lived there before coming to New Zealand. England, Canada, the USA and Australia were common destinations for the Scottish diaspora.

In a future issue we'll look at how to use census records from those countries to help track down your relatives and unlock your family's stories.



# News and events



## Clan Matheson this summer

Come along to the Clan Matheson tent at these events to meet others with a shared interest in Matheson heritage. We'll be at:

- [Hororata Highland Games](#), Saturday 9 November 2024
- [Waipu Highland Games](#), Tuesday 31 December 2024 (note the change from the traditional New Year's Day event)
- [Turakina Highland Games](#), Saturday 25 January 2025
- [Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo](#), Saturday 8 February 2025. Clan Matheson will be the featured clan for this event and our Chief, Sir Alexander Matheson, guest of honour.
- The national pipe band [championships](#), Queens Park, Invercargill, Friday 7 and Saturday 8 March 2025.

## Visit of Chief of Clan Matheson

Sir Alexander Matheson, Chief of Clan Matheson, and his wife Katharine (Lady Matheson) will be visiting New Zealand in January/February next year. This is a private visit but they will be taking part in three Clan Matheson events.

You're welcome at any of these, and we encourage you to mark the date of any in your area and make plans to take part in our informal events.

- Dunedin, Wednesday 29 January. We'll have an informal gathering in the late afternoon/evening, probably a pot-luck/BYO meal. Time and venue to be advised.
- [Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo](#), Saturday 8 February. Clan Matheson will be the featured clan for this event and our chief, Sir Alexander Matheson, guest of honour.
- Waipu, Sunday 9 February. There will be an informal afternoon tea in the old school building in the grounds of the [Waipu Scottish Migration Museum](#). Make a day of it at Waipu! You can also visit this excellent museum, and anyone interested is welcome to gather for dinner at [McLeod's Pizza Barn](#) (on your own account).

Watch our website [events page](#) and [Facebook group](#) for further details.

# How to connect with us

## Clan Matheson New Zealand

We are the New Zealand branch of the international Clan Matheson Society. Our objectives are to:

- foster an interest in Matheson heritage
- forge links between people in New Zealand with Matheson heritage, and between them and kinsfolk in other countries
- help people with Matheson heritage find out more about their family history and family stories



### Clan Matheson New Zealand website

[www.clanmatheson.org.nz](http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz)

### International Clan Matheson Society website

[www.clanmatheson.org](http://www.clanmatheson.org)

News	<a href="mailto:news@clanmatheson.org.nz">news@clanmatheson.org.nz</a>
Family history	<a href="mailto:web@clanmatheson.org.nz">web@clanmatheson.org.nz</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.clanmatheson.org.nz">web@clanmatheson.org.nz</a>
Secretary	<a href="mailto:secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz">secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz</a>
Chair	<a href="mailto:chair@clanmatheson.org.nz">chair@clanmatheson.org.nz</a>

## Clan Matheson New Zealand committee

Lena Orum (Chair and secretary)	Auckland
Rodger Matheson (treasurer)	Auckland
Andrew Matheson (news editor)	Wellington
Graeme Matheson	Christchurch
Wayne Matheson	Queenstown

## Chief's Lieutenant for New Zealand

Andrew Matheson

## Chief's Deputy Lieutenants for New Zealand

Blair Matheson

Graeme Matheson

## Clan Matheson New Zealand trust

Trustees Andrew Matheson, Blair Matheson, Graeme Matheson

[trust@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:trust@clanmatheson.org.nz)

## Support our work

We welcome any support you can provide, whether a one-off donation or a regular payment.

Clan Matheson New Zealand is a registered charity (number CC60849), and donations of \$5 or more qualify for a tax credit of 33.33 cents in every dollar donated.

To get a receipt for taxation purposes, make a payment to the account below with 'Donation' in the reference field, and email your name, address and the amount and date of the payment to [secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz](mailto:secretary@clanmatheson.org.nz).

### Clan Matheson New Zealand bank account

03 1559 0103339 00