

Clan Matheson gathering 2024

Information sheet version 3

From the Chief of Clan Matheson.

General

The Gathering will take place from 20–23 July 2024 inclusive — 20–21 July in Lochalsh and 22–23 July on the Isle of Skye. Please make special note that the plan may yet vary a little; if our numbers fluctuate or circumstances change.

Time	Event	Remarks
Saturday 20 July		
0930	Gates open at Lochcarron Games	
By 1000	Recommended time of arrival	All to check in at the Clan tent
1030	Clan photos	
1100	Track & field events begin	
1200	Clan marches on behind pipe band	
1700	Possible 1 hour boat trip with Calum Mackenzie from Plockton to see the seals and Loch Carron (see note 1 below)	
	Supper under own arrangements	
Sunday 21 July		
am	Organised car tour to sites of clan interest (the church service in Inverinate is looking less likely)	If wet weather, perhaps self-help visits to Eilean Donan Castle which has a restaurant.
1200	Rendesous in cars at Balmacara Square to visit remains of the old fort near our ancient gathering place beside Loch Achaidh-na-h'Inich* for a picnic. It will involve a 300m walk from the cars up to the fort. * If in doubt, say Acha-na-heeni !	Croft Café Duirinish for those who don't want to go to the fort?
1400	Guided walks round Balmacara Estate Coastal Path Or visits to Plockton	Approx 1.5 hrs slow walk, easy going. Max 40 with guides, the rest have to come with me!
1600	Tea at Nell Matheson's house in Duirinish	
Late pm	Move individually to Portree area	
Evening (1800 TBC)	Clan Council, Balmacara Cottage	Chief, Chief's Lieutenants, Secretary UK Branch
	Supper under own arrangements	

Time	Event	Remarks
Monday 22 July		
0930–1100	Clan Parliament, Portree Gathering Hall (<i>see note 2 below</i>)	
1130	Rendezvous at the Co-op car park, Portree Organised car tour of Trotternish peninsula: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic at Rubha Hunish for walkers • Picnic at Staffin beach for non-walkers • Duntulm Castle • Flora Macdonald's grave • Quirang 	Rubha Hunish, the most northerly point of Skye, is very spectacular
1800–2030	Clan party, Portree Gathering Hall. Drinks & canapés.	
Tuesday 23 July		
am	Rendezvous at the Co-op car park, Portree Organised car visit to Neist Point for walkers. Organised car visit to Talisker distillery for non-walkers.	Neist Point, the most westerly point of Skye, is very spectacular
pm	Either picnic or Dunvegan Castle restaurant. Organised car visit to Castle & Garden.	
1800	Final drink; meet at bar of Cuillin Hills Hotel, Portree	For those who wish
	Gathering ends	

Note 1. Calum Mackenzie's boat trip, Sat 20 July.

I have made a provisional private booking of Calum's boat for a 1 hour trip from Plockton. This is a tour out into Loch Carron with local history and other wildlife commentary, and includes a visit to see the seals.

- Max 40 passengers.
- It will cost in the region of £12–16 per seat, depending on the number of takers; I could ask for a second trip if numbers are good.
- Presently the booking is for 5.00pm but it should be possible to move that timing forward or back by one hour if that suits a majority.
- *Please communicate your level of interest in this boat trip to your Chief's Lieutenant, so I know what to organise.*
- To help your planning, the drive from the Lochcarron Games at Attadale to Plockton takes about 30 minutes, or you could get the train from Attadale to Plockton (only four per day, the relevant one being 3.37pm from Attadale; it takes 25 minutes; watch out for summer timetable changes!).
- NB This trip is weather dependent; it will not run if the weather is bad; so ☹️.

If you wish to do this boat trip under your own arrangements on another day, see

<https://www.calums-sealtrips.com>

Note 2. Clan Parliament, Mon 22 July

This will be a chaired and minuted meeting in the Portree Gathering Hall for anyone attending our Clan Gathering, to discuss items of clan interest. An agenda will be available on the day.

All members of the Clan Society and their invited guests are welcome. It is not a public meeting.

Costs

Clan Society members should organise their own accommodation and transport, sharing as desired.

Please plan to share cars wherever possible during the four days of our Gathering. Many West Highland and Hebridean roads are small and narrow. This is particularly true on the Isle of Skye; numbers of vehicles sometime outstrip parking capacity.

I anticipate two Gathering charges. Both will be collected centrally by each Branch and transferred to the UK Branch before the Gathering takes place.

1. **Participation charge.** £15 per person aged 16 or over who attends a Clan event at any time during the Gathering; this is a one-off charge to cover all Gathering administrative costs.
2. **Clan drinks party charge.** Mon 22 July Portree Gathering Hall. This charge is to cover the cost of the food. All attending should bring whatever drinks they wish to consume themselves; this is to avoid a costly alcohol licence and bar staff.
 - £30 per adult.
 - £10 per child under 12.
 - Free for children under 4.
 - Fizzy water and squash included.
 - Glasses provided.

Members of the Clan will be expected to pay for themselves as necessary for entrance to the Lochcarron Games, Talisker Distillery, Dunvegan Castle, Calum Mackenzie's boat trip etc.

There is no charge for the guided walks round Balmacara Estate Coastal Path, tea at Nell Matheson's house in Duirinish, or the car tours on Skye (less entry to Dunvegan Castle).

NB. There is no obligation to attend all events, but I shall be delighted if you do.

Numbers

I will be asking Chief's Lieutenants for an update on their numbers in early March, and monthly thereafter as the Gathering approaches.

It is most important that Clan Society members keep their Chief's Lieutenant, not me, informed of their intentions so that planning can be done accurately. I will be asking them to detail which events each person intends to attend, so please consider the programme carefully.

Accommodation

Book early! Short-let rentals often get booked up quickly for the high season (May-August). NB I recommend that you get organised sooner rather than later. Possible websites include:

- Airbnb <https://www.airbnb.co.uk>
- VRBO <https://www.vrbo.com>
- Islands & Highlands Cottages, Portree, Isle of Skye IV51 9ER. +44 1478 612123 / 312123. <https://www.ihcottages.com>

Or you might want to go to a hotel. Worth looking at <https://www.booking.com> or similar.

I recommend that you do an online comparison of 2024 accommodation, menu and bar prices before booking. Some establishments in Lochalsh have become highly priced.

If you are wondering whether or not to find different accommodation for the Lochalsh and Skye phases, my recommendation is that you should. The car journey (there is no rail link) between the Kyle of Lochalsh and Portree is approximately 1 hour. While this journey is certainly feasible, you may not wish to do it 4 times in 2 days, and anyway Portree itself is a most picturesque and enjoyable place to spend time.

If you are renting a self-catering property and wish to buy food, there is a good Co-op in Kyle and a Spar shop in Balmacara. On Skye, there are first class Co-ops in Portree and Broadford.

Getting to Lochalsh and Isle of Skye

Air

The closest airport is Inverness, from which you can either get a bus/train into Inverness if you want to use the Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh railway, or hire a car and drive to Kyle. There are more air connections to Glasgow, the next nearest airport, but it is a longer road journey from there to Kyle.

Car hire

It is easy to hire from Inverness airport (Dalcross) or Inverness railway station, but you might also be lucky with:

- Stephen Morrison in Portree (07810 560977, 01478 612688, <https://www.morrisoncarhire.co.uk>).
- Kyle Taxis (01599 534323, <http://www.lochalsh.net/taxi/>).

Rail

The quickest rail journey would be to get a train to Inverness (main line service from anywhere in the UK). From Inverness, you could either change to the Kyle of Lochalsh line (a famous scenic journey and one to be savoured) or hire a car (approximately 2 hours). Or you could travel to Glasgow which has more travel links from the rest of the UK, but it is a longer car journey from Glasgow to Kyle (approximately 4 hrs).

If you have time to spend in Inverness railway station, keep an eye out for the memorial tablet on a wall, which names the Directors of the railway company which pushed the line through in the late century (chairman Sir Alexander Matheson) and for photographs in the waiting room of Duncraig station in the 1900s.

Buses

- https://www.lochalsh.com/bus_services_in_skye_and_lochalsh.html
- <https://bustimes.org/localities/kyle-of-lochalsh>
- <https://www.geopunk.co.uk/locality/ES002246>

Lochcarron Games, Attadale

This will be the first day of our Gathering. The Games are held in the park beside Attadale House, owned by Mathesons until the 1920s. We will have our own tent in the park as a focal point. We need to arrive punctually (see programme above).

In order to avoid the congestion and delays of 2023, this year the gates will open at 09.30am. For planning purposes, please allow time to get in, share cars where possible, and aim to arrive at our tent **before** 10.00am for registration.

At 10.30am we will do a clan photograph. Events start at 11.00am and we will march on as a clan behind the pipe band at 12.00am.

Tickets. Members of the Clan Society are responsible for getting their own tickets for the Games. Adult will pay £10 each; children aged 16 and under get free entry. There is no additional parking fee.

I urge everyone to buy their tickets online beforehand via <https://www.lochcarrongames.org.uk> in order to speed your passage through the gate which was the bottleneck last year. Website ticket sales will be available within the next few weeks. If you need to buy tickets at the gate on the day, they will be available, but for **CASH ONLY**.

Attadale is a halt on the Inverness – Kyle railway line. The park where the Games are held is a short walk from the halt.

At our last attendance at the Games, Clan Matheson acquitted itself remarkably well in the Hill Race and other athletic events, so please encourage those who would like to take part. See <https://www.lochcarrongames.org.uk> for information as it comes out.

Food is available from stalls all day.

There will be a number of stalls selling clan merchandise. Check carefully for accuracy before buying (last time there were several items, e.g. wrong motto on clan badges, ill-designed clan badges, spelling mistakes).

Lochcarron Weavers <https://www.lochcarron.co.uk> is a reputable firm which will have a stand at the Games. The manager, Joy Moran, has agreed to give a 10% discount on any items from their website to any Clan Matheson supporter, as long as an order is placed before the end of February 2024. Quote “Clan Matheson” and use her personal email joy@lochcarron.com She will arrange for items to be packed and taken to their stall at the Lochcarron Games on Sat 20 July 2024, so that you can collect from there; or you could make your own delivery arrangement with her. NB this will be a private arrangement between Lochcarron Weavers and clan members, the Clan Society will not be involved.

Transfer from Lochalsh to Portree at the end of Day 2

From the Lochcarron Games to Portree is 84 km by road; the journey will take about 75 minutes.

Skye is joined to the mainland at Kyle by a major road bridge – no toll to pay and no ferry required.

The railway terminus is at Kyle; there is no rail link to Portree.

There is a bus service (see link above).

Clan merchandise

The Secretary/Treasurer UK Branch will shortly be issuing detailed information about items of clan merchandise for sale to members attending.

Weather

It's best to plan on wet weather and be pleasantly surprised if the sun shines. Work on the old saying “There is no such thing as bad weather, only inadequate clothing”. Midges can be a nuisance; insect repellent is advisable and perhaps a midge net to cover your head and hat down to neck level; if you don't end up using the net, consider it a bonus!

Communicating.

Before the Gathering begins, a WhatsApp group will be set up. To this end, your Chief's Lieutenant will ask for the mobile number of those who wish to be in it. We hope to share stories and photos.

Other activities

If you want to spend more time in the area before or after the Gathering, here are some ideas for visits:

- The Outer Hebrides, especially Lewis (Stornoway Castle built by Sir James Matheson) and Harris.
- The west coast railway from Kyle to Inverness, 4 trains per day, >2.5 hours journey time. <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/train-times/inverness-to-kyle-lochalsh>
- Lochalsh:
 - Eilean Donan Castle <https://www.eileandonancastle.com>
- Isle of Skye:
 - Skye Highland Games 7 Aug 2024. <https://www.skye-highland-games.co.uk/information.html#:~:text=The%202024%20games%20will%20be%20held%20on%20the%207th%20August.>
 - Kinloch Lodge Hotel <https://kinloch-lodge.co.uk>
 - Three Chimneys Hotel <https://threechimneys.co.uk>
 - Talisker Distillery <https://www.malts.com/en-gb/distilleries/talisker>
 - Skye Weavers <https://www.skyeweavers.co.uk>
 - Oyster Shed <https://www.theoysterman.co.uk>
 - Dunvegan Castle <https://www.dunvegancastle.com>

And further afield don't forget:

- Fri 26 Jul – Sun 11 Aug, Olympic Games in Paris.
- Sat 3 – Mon 26 Aug, Edinburgh Tattoo.

If you want to research family links, you might find <http://www.rosscromartyroots.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=53913> to be helpful.