Excursion Particulars.

Venue Operators: National Trust (NSW). The National Trust is a non-government not-for-profit charity that was established in 1945. The upkeep of the Old Government House site is not funded by any government and is reliant on donations and membership fees from the Trust. There are only two paid positions at the site and the daily operation is possible because of the generosity of a group of 170 volunteers.

Venue Contacts: Lyn Henry and Joy Jones. 9635 8149. oghouse@bigpond.com.

Venue Address: Parramatta Park, Parramatta NSW, 2150.

Tour Name: Slates and Chamberpots.

Stage and KLA: Suitable for stages 2 and 3. Aimed at KLA area of H.S.I.E.

Tour starting times: 10:00 to 11:30 am and 12:30 to 2:00 pm Monday to Friday.

Tour Prices: $6 p/p for group tours. Teacher admission is free. School membership of the National Trust allows 20 free child passes and subsequent 10% discount prices on entry. School Membership entails a $30 joining fee and a $121 yearly fee.


Transport operators: M & L Coaches provide coaches to the western Sydney area seating from 12 to 63 people. The company is over 10 years old and complies with all government regulations and standards. The company caters for primary school excursions. (P) (02) 4736 3227. (M) 0412 900446. http://www.coachandbushire.com.au/ Prices subject to change.
Rationale and Background Information.

The rationale for choosing the site of the Old Government House for an excursion is to meet multiple objectives from the H.S.I.E. KLA syllabus, particularly including objectives CCS2.1, CCS3.1, CUS3.4, SSS2.7 and ENS2.5.

The excursion to Old Government House has a strong focus on Change and Continuity but other strands of Cultures, Environments, Social Systems and Structures from the H.S.I.E KLA are well represented. Values and attitudes of Social Justice, Intercultural Understanding, Ecological Sustainability, Democratic Processes and Beliefs and Moral Codes of the early colony can also easily be explored.

The Old Government House site is currently being assessed as a World Heritage Site and is the oldest public building in Australia. It was the residence of the first several Governors of the N.S.W. colony. It is situated at the site of the first successful cultivation of crops for the First Fleet. It is an important area for Australia, not just because of its association with the First Fleet but it was also a very early meeting place between Aboriginal peoples and the European colonists. The area was inhabited by the Burramattagal clan of the Darug tribe. This tribe covered much of what is Sydney and there are still traces of previous ecological land use by these people which exists within the Park.

Being the vice regal residence of the early Governors of N.S.W., Old Government House has historic links to the early politics of the colony such as being the place where William Bligh was arrested. The House is connected to some of the most important people of the new colony and hosted many diplomatic visits from Great Britain showing the evolving relationships the colony had with ‘the mother country’. Much of the architecture and décor is from the Georgian period and includes royal portraits such as a King George the 3rd of England present in the dining room. Descriptions of nearby English-styled gardens by French diplomats are also present.

Much of the historic building and furniture of the house was designed and made by former convicts such as the Francis Greenway portico or the John Oatley grandfather clock by the base of the stairs. The technological appliances of the time as well as the different social structures and classes is very apparent.

With Governors, servants, important people of the colony, diplomatic guests, Burramattagal aborigines, settlers and convicts all having been in close proximity and each leaving a mark on the House and surrounds, the site is a fantastic microcosm of early settlement Australia and a great opportunity for students to relate to the past through visible landmarks and objects in a rich historical setting.

The venue is operated by the National Trust and is staffed largely by volunteers with a passion for history. The staff has been trained in local history and role play and have much experience in hosting Primary and Secondary school excursions. The staff has developed a number of school based programs involving interactive role playing activities with informational tours throughout the whole house. The program that was chosen for this study is the Slate and Chamberpots program which includes the students in a role playing exercise of a school from 1815. The venue may host one class each morning and afternoon but also operates a combined program with Elizabeth Farm should two classes wish to attend the excursion with classes alternating between the two venues during morning and afternoon sessions.
Communications with Parents, Site and School.

It is anticipated that 2 or 3 supervisor helpers will be needed to help with the excursion and these will generally be family members of the students. A period of three months notice should be given of the excursion that allows helpers to organise their availability and allow guardians to give permission for students to participate in the excursion. A three month period is also more than enough time to book a date with the venue. Supervisors and venue guides should also be aware of the teaching lesson plans and work with the teacher in achieving anticipated outcomes for the excursion. Briefing guides and helpers with the activity worksheet questions should help students complete their worksheets and participate in post excursion H.S.I.E activities. Guides should also be briefed regarding the background knowledge the students have already received in the classroom before the excursion.

The excursion involves some outside components relying on good weather and so the best time of the year to organise the excursion would be in November or early December. Mobile phone communication with the bus/van driver should be established in case of bad weather so that students can be picked up at Old Government House if needed. Alternatively wet weather gear could be kept on the bus for student use if needed. An early organisation of the excursion would also be appreciated by the school principle so that there are not any date clashes with other major events planned for the students on the excursion date.

Transport and Location.

Old Government House is located within the 86 acres of Parramatta Park. Parramatta Park itself has many places of historic interest. The Park is a short 10 minute walk west of the Parramatta Central Business District which is easily accessible by ferry, bus and train. Old Government House stands just inside Parramatta Park about 150 metres from the George Street Gatehouse.

Within the Park, just north of Parramatta River are two large carparks beside Parramatta stadium. These are less than 1 km from Old Government House and allow free pick-up and drop-off points for cars, vans and buses as well as including sections of free parking. Transport to the site would preferably be by hired vans or a bus straight to the venue or to one of these two large carparks at Parramatta Stadium. The advantage of using transport to Parramatta Stadium is that it allows a short walk to the Government House which would symbolise a journey to the past and build suspense in the students. The Park is well endowed with historic sites which are well sign-posted. This would help students set the scene for their excursion and allow a pedestrian approach up the hill, westward to the Old Government House providing the most inspiring view. Movement within Parramatta Park is largely pedestrian. It is free of traffic except for a slow moving one-way ring road. Transportation within the Old Government House site is completely pedestrian and controlled by the National Trust staff.

Parramatta Park Map

For enlargement of Map see page 15.
Risk Assessment of Site.

Site public liability cover: Yes.
Pre-requisite skill or fitness level: No.
Continual supervision of students: Yes. By trained guides or accompanying teacher.
Risks: Yes. Use of the stairs within Old Government House
Possible interference from members of the public.
Primary source material: Yes. Available to be handed out during the program
Equipment maintenance: Yes. In accordance with the OHS Regulations and standards.
Advisable clothing: Yes. Good footwear and hats are required.
During winter months water and wind proof clothing.
Staff training: Yes. Costumed actors are located throughout the venue.
All staff are trained in the emergency procedures.
Movement through venue: Yes. Provided by venue staff and volunteers.
Safe access to and from the venue: Yes. Wheelchair accessible to all sections except the upstairs section of the main house.
Availability of toilets: Yes. Including a disabled toilet.
Site construction and maintenance: Yes. Must be carried out by licensed personnel
First aid kits and officer: Yes. Available at all activities with a trained first aid officer present.
Staff employment screening: No. Staff are not required to have undergone screening.
Staff child protection screening: No. Staff are not required to have undergone screening.
Prohibited Employment Declaration: Yes. Completed by all staff.

Schedule for day of Excursion.

8:50 am: Depart school. (Strathfield).
10:00 am: Tour Begins. (Students begin role playing as 1815 Primary School Class).
10:30 am: Tour Continues. (Students break up into 4 groups to tour Old Government House).
11:30 am: Tour Concludes. Drinks and toilet Break. (Walk to Parramatta Bath House).
12:00 pm: Arrive Parramatta Bath House. (Walk to Government Farm site).
12:15 pm: Arrive Government Farm site.
12:30 pm: Lunch.
1:30 pm: Depart Parramatta.
2:00 pm: Arrive back at school. (Strathfield).

2:00 to 3:00 pm: HSIE discussion and revision of worksheets.
Pre-Excursion H.S.I.E. Lessons.

Ideally, the excursion should occur ¾ ‘s of the way through the H.S.I.E. unit of work about early Sydney settlement. The students should have had experience relating to the pre settlement lifestyles of the Darug people with a focus on culture and ecological use of the land. Students should also have been exposed to the reasons for and establishment of the British convict settlement at Sydney and its continuing relationship with Britain. Students should be familiar with the role of the Governor of the colony and aware of some of the persons who have held that position. A previous lesson should have included a short written essay on their thoughts about what it would be like to have lived in the early N.S.W. colony compared to today.

There should be worksheets designed for the excursion. These worksheets should be temporarily handed out in the lesson preceding the excursion so students can familiarise themselves with questions and general concepts of the excursion as well as choosing the two extra questions they wish to answer. Students will be told that they can fill out the worksheets during and also after the excursion. Questions on the worksheet should be kept simple. It's use is to prepare the students for the excursion, keep them on track during the day without overloading them and to help with recall in the post excursion H.S.I.E. classes. The worksheet should include 3 open questions and a further 2 extra questions that are chosen by each student from a list of 15 questions and rationed by the teacher so that each of the 15 questions have at least 2 students allocated to recording the answers.

A list of the 15 extra question might be:

1. What is the length and width of the Old Government House in paces / steps?
2. What were the names of some of the Governor's that have lived in Old Government House?
3. What were the names and positions of some people who lived in the house that weren't Governors.
4. Name some objects in the house that were made by previous convicts.
5. Where was Government Farm located in relation to the house?
6. Name some differences in the 1815 classroom compared to today?
7. What was the diet of the local Burramattal Aboriginal people?
8. What were the different forms of punishment used in an 1815 classroom?
9. What were two issues of the early colony that the resident Governors were concerned with?
10. How did the colonists in the kitchen make butter?
11. Describe how the house ovens in the kitchen worked to cook food.
12. Contrast the working of the clothes press in the Housekeepers Room with those of today.
13. What are some of the ways in which the people in the house used to entertain themselves?
14. Find 2 pictures in the house and record the names and stories of the people shown.
15. Name some things in the house that have changed with the invention of electricity.
Approach to Old Government House.

Choosing to disembark the buses near Parramatta Stadium allows the teacher to take advantage of the other historic points of interest in the park and set the historic theme for the day before reaching Old Government House. On the Northern side of Parramatta Park where the Stadium carparks are located, it would be advantageous to cross the Parramatta River on foot along O'Connell Street so as to remind students of the expedition of the First Fleet originally coming to Parramatta looking for fertile soil to grow food to the colony. This would provide a good link to the First Fleet settlement at Sydney.

Fifty metres past the bridge is the George Street Gatehouse with a large pink bricked arch before it which was built in 1885 with a suitable dated plaque. The walking underneath the large arch would also symbolise coming into a different place and there are historical signs inside the gate and a map showing the historical sites which could further allow students to transport themselves back to the past. A toilet block is also available just inside the gate. Inside the Park there is much signed information regarding the site. It includes the history of the local Aboriginal Burramattagal people with remaining trees showing evidence of both Aboriginal ‘possum smoking’ and ring barking. There are also signs denoting information on the convict houses that were previously situated there, as well as the Murray Gardens and a Zoo which should help the students relate to the concept of change. There is also a large reproduction of an illustration showing horses grazing in front of the Governors House in 1844 from that spot. Along the approach to the Old Government House is a memorial obelisk erected for Lady Mary Fitzroy who was thrown from her carriage and died in 1847. She, along with her husband, Governor Fitzroy, who was driving the carriage at the time, were resident at Old Government House. Past this obelisk is the pathway approach to Old Government House with the entrance on the left hand or southern side. On entrance to the site, the students are presented with a list of resident Governors from 1790 to 1855 together with the corresponding structural developments of the house. (See page 14 illustration). This round about walk from Parramatta Stadium to Old Governors House is only a 10 minute journey or perhaps up to 20 minutes including exploration and toilet breaks.
Primary School Role Play.

The first activity of the tour is a half hour spent in a mock 1815 classroom. The teacher (Miss Johnson) is played in costume by Lyn Henry who is a major organiser and manager of the centre. Lyn has a background as a former teacher and has spent years working and helping to manage the previous Old Sydney Town theme park, north of Sydney.

The students sit in rows on wooden benches each with a slate and piece of chalk together with some cloth to rub out their markings. The classroom is small and has many ethical passages hung around the room in the English spelling of the time with a biblical theme. Conversion tables are displayed on posters showing distances in inches, feet, yards, chain, furlongs, miles etc as well as currency in pennies, shillings, farthings and pounds etc. Other posters include animals and country capitals with Australia being referred to as New Holland. All teaching resources have been chosen for their authenticity, being from textbooks of the second fleet or of children’s engraved educational blocks of the time.

The children are involved in a ‘hands on’ fast passed role play where they are encouraged to sympathise with school children of the early 19th century. The students learn the times tables, prayers and imperial units by rote as well as the history of the colony at the time. The teacher (Miss Johnson) is very strict and authoritative.

Another costumed student played by a volunteer is severely reprimanded and made fun of by the class calling him a ‘dunce’. Miss Johnson also continually smacks a large piece of wood against wooden stands and shakes a bundled group of branches threateningly to the students. Any students who are getting upset are moved next to their normal teacher a little away from the other students for comfort. Lyn Henry will discuss with the teacher before the session whether there are any students with special needs in the class that may have to be treated differently. Lyn also makes a point of joining with the students after the completion of the tour and removing her costume and joking with any of the students who might have become a little upset.

The students generally leave the classroom with a sigh of relief and many teachers make the comment that they wouldn’t mind a bit more discipline in their class. The house was used as a school at different times including by the Kings School up until 1965. Social attitudes together with Change and Continuity are strong themes.
Old Government House Tour.

Depending on the number of students, the class will be divided into different groups and shown the house by different guides criss-crossing from the entry waiting room to the dining room and drawing room, housekeeping room and kitchen. Guides are trained to engage students with information and questions relating to the house. These skills should be co-opted to work together with the school HSIE objectives. Students are not allowed to touch objects in the house and photography is forbidden.

The house is decorated and styled in the colonial period with emphasis on the time that Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his wife occupied the house. The house has two wings for the residents (northern) and servants (southern) as well as upstairs bedrooms for the Governor’s family and guests. In the servants section of the house there are several bells that are connected by ropes to the different rooms of the house. These bells were activated by residents of the house to notify servants that they were needed. The ropes can be seen hung throughout the house. A few of the highlights include interesting furniture such as two piano’s, lion engraved handles on drawers, terrestrial and celestial globes, convict-made wardrobes and drawers, concave mirrors to help reflect candle light around the rooms and the curtains in the ladies drawing room displaying Governor Macquarie’s ties with the Indian subcontinent, interesting objects such as the shoe scrapers near the entrance to the house, candle and kerosene lighting apparatus, the lead-lined esky, writing quills, portraits of various Governor’s such as Fitzroy and various house guests and information on the various English flower gardens that were grown near the house. The kitchen is especially rich with dated technologies that contrast strongly with the present. Butter churners, flame fanners, large pots and kettles, large metal prongs, a huge oven with a 15 foot wooden food placer, a small food warmer, an ice box and reference to the house ‘kitchen garden’ are great glimpses into the past lifestyles present in the regal home of the early Governors.
Exiting Old Government House.

Exiting the building site, the excursion will continue walking westward up the hill to the remains of Governor Brisbane’s historic Bath Houses and Observatory as well as the Boer War memorial with steel cannons. The Observatory remains marks the place where much of the Southern skies were first mapped and begins the place from which Australian longitudinal markings were measured from. The observatory was thus given the description of the ‘Greenwich of the Southern Hemisphere’.

This area marks the highest place of Parramatta Park. From here the excursion will stand at the top of The Crescent section facing northwards and across Parramatta. This would be a good position to mention that the first successful colonial crops were planted in the land below in 1789 together with cattle grazing after clearing of the land and the large crescent shaped land has its shape from originally being the bed of a section of Parramatta River before it changed course. The fertility of the soils here is due to Aboriginal land management and the volcanic rock from previously active Prospect Hill and the Blue Mountains which deposited in the area over millions of years being transported by Parramatta River. It would also be a good exercise to imagine the pre settlement crescent wooded land and the local Burramattagal people hunting possums beside the river. Contrasting land use by Aboriginal and Europeans together with concepts of ecological sustainability could be highlighted and develop further examples of change and continuity.

From here, the excursion will proceed down the hill towards the river where there are multiple signposts denoted the planting of wheat, barley, corn and oats both before and after the river. The excursion will proceed to the north side of the river where are planted two groups of crops by the Parramatta Council on a small hill to denote the place of Government Farm. The area also contains a map showing and explaining the geography of the Government and Dodd’s farm from 1790 together with another illustrated view of Old Government House from that spot in 1793.

This area is beside the starting point of where the buses are and so the student’s lunches can be obtained and distributed easily. There is plenty of open land here for the students to have lunch, especially on the land just above the planted crops beside the Parramatta Stadium. The grass here is very soft and flat and having a great view of Parramatta Stadium which should delight the students and provide an easily monitored area for the teachers and helpers to supervise.
Post-Excursion H.S.I.E. Lessons.

After the excursion returns to school the students should be encouraged to talk about their experiences in the classroom in an informal manner. The teacher should also hand back the worksheets to the students and encourage them to help each other answer all of the questions.

In the following lesson, the students should again be asked to write a short essay on how they think life would have been in the early N.S.W. colony compared to today. A slideshow showing pictures of and around the house should be displayed on the ICT to help trigger the memories of the excursion. Students can work within their tables, sharing information and experiences from their excursion and worksheets. This exercise could be used as an assessment tool and allows the teacher to measure how much the students have gained from their excursion experiences.

Follow up lessons could involve role playing and different tables taking on the different roles of aboriginals, governing families, servants, soldiers and convicts. These roles could be rotated within the groups so as to facilitate the appreciation of early settlement life from many different perspectives highlighting social justice issues.

Students should also be led in discussion and role play in thinking about the different school experiences of primary students in the early colony. Students could take turns being the teacher (Miss Johnson). Reference should be made to technological differences in the school together with the differences of educational content and methods as well as the impact of finances on education.

Links to the English KLA could be made with the reading of novels set in the relevant time period or through studying the diaries and letters of actual people from that time. Links to the science and technology KLA could be made regarding how different inventions might impact and change the nature of the house. Investigating the science of the house kitchen in preparing, cooking and preserving food could also be made.

Links to the creative arts KLA to paintings and illustrations of the time can also be made.

Links to the religion KLA can be made highlighting the community volunteering of time and resources to preserve and promote the historic sites through the National Trust co-operative. The importance and necessity of such civic participation could be recognised and extended to other local Sydney groups and related to the assistance given to the school by volunteers.

Side and Front Views Of Old Government House.
Planning.  (Contingency and ‘to do’ list).

Students need to be know that touching of objects during the tour of the house is not allowed. This should be mentioned prior to the excursion day as well as being reminded several times on the day including just before entering the house.

Toilet breaks are planned before leaving the school as well as before and after the tour at the Old Government House premises. If needed, there are public toilets at the George Street Gatehouse and at the crescent area just south of the Parramatta River across from the Government Farm site.

Not less than 4 adult supervisors, including teachers, should be present on the excursion to allow for suitable supervision and marshalling as well as unexpected events occurring. The marshalling of students is particularly needed at the approach along O’Connell Street towards the George Street Gatehouse as well as inside the gate crossing the ring road towards the approach to Old Government House.

After the tour, marshalling is again important in the walk back to the buses particularly when crossing the ring road before the river. The ring road inside the Park is a one-way single lane road which has a speed limit of 30 km / hr. Joggers and cyclists may also be present on the road.

Student lunches should be kept on the bus and distributed by supervisory staff when the students return to the north side of the river after the Old Government House tour. Water may be carried by the supervisors and supplied to the students if requested after the end of the tour of Old Government House.

Activity worksheets should be handed out to the students as they enter the Old Government House and collected again after the completion of the tour. These worksheets should be used instead of the venue-supplied worksheets and be supplied to the guides and supervisors in the preceding week before the excursion in order to aid with student comprehension.

During the tour the teacher, supervisors and guides should prompt the children for answers to worksheet questions at relevant times.
Sample H.S.I.E Old Government House Worksheet.

1. What are some things in Old Government House that are not in your own house.
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2. What are some things in your own house that are not in Old Government House.
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. Which house would you prefer your family to live in and why?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4. What are some of the ways in which the people in the house used to entertain themselves?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. Name some differences in the 1815 classroom compared to today?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Appendices.

PARRAMATTA & OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE AS AN HISTORIC SITE
Pre – colonization

Prior to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 there were about 600 Aboriginal tribes in Australia, each with its own language and legends. The Darug tribe occupied an area from the Blue Mountains to coast and from the Shoalhaven River to Broken Bay. Tribes consisted of family associations and were divided into clans consisting of thirty to sixty people.

The clan around present day Parramatta were the Burramattagal – The name Parramatta is a European interpretation of the Burramatta name. 'Parramatta' has been variously translated as meaning 'the place where the eels lie down', 'the head of a river', and 'plenty of eels'.

The land was flat and rather low; the trees were described in contemporary accounts as immensely large and at considerable distance from each other and the ground covered with rich and succulent grass that extended westward from Parramatta to the Cumberland plain. A few remnant trees still survive in Parramatta Park.

Aboriginal people used the area as a place to cross the river and it provided access to different environments, water and land. They hunted possums and sometimes kangaroo as well as many other animals on the open grasses, and used fire as a means for changing the environment and as a tool to assist with hunting. All groups took advantage of a rich range of fruits and vegetables such as yams. Fishing from the Parramatta River supplied them with mullet, perch and eels.
1. Arthur Phillip (1790)

A 44 x 14 foot, lath & plaster house with hall, bedroom and living room, with skillion along the back.

2. Arthur Phillip (1793)

Two buildings, one a 2 level and one a 1 level building added. One was used as a store, the other a kitchen.

3. John Hunter (1799)

Removes the lath & plaster house and builds a 60 x 24 foot, 2 storey brick house, with cellars underneath. It is one room wide. The oldest surviving part of O.G.H.

4. Lachlan Macquarie (c. 1812)

Add a 2 storey block to house staircase and other rooms.

5. Lachlan Macquarie (c. 1815)

Builds kitchen pavilion, then Governor's private wing. Phillip's outbuildings removed.

6. Lachlan Macquarie (c. 1816)

Staircase block demolished to 3 feet from the ground and whole section rebuilt in larger form adding another 4 rooms. New front door and portico added.