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Have a fling at Old Government House during *Autumn in the Highland Manor* event

Ach, laddies and lassies. Dig out the tartan kilts and Pringle sweaters from the cupboard. Then come along to enjoy *Autumn in the Highland Manor*, an afternoon celebration of Scottish highland culture to be held at the National Trust's Old Government House, Parramatta Park.

The Australian Gaelic Singers and other Gaelic performers will present traditional songs, stories and music throughout the Georgian rooms, hallways and courtyard of Australia's oldest public residence on Sunday, May 22 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

There will be traditional highland dancing in the courtyard, singing in the stairhall, harp playing in the drawing room, story telling in the bedroom, fiddle playing and piping throughout the house and grounds, not to mention native Gaelic spoken in the kitchens.

Interactive sessions include discussions and demonstrations of traditional Scottish harp and bodhran (drum) making. For kids, there will be story telling and a chance to participate in the highland dancing and music making.

There will also be several stalls with clan information, family tree advice and info from organisations that promote Scottish culture. Also of interest to some: a discussion and information on Scotch malt whisky in OGH's cellar. For foodies, there will be traditional Scottish fare for sale such as Dundee cake, black bun, potato drop scones, shortbread, even Scottish sausages.

It is the first time the National Trust has organised such an event at Old Government House, according to National Trust Executive Director, Elsa Atkin.

"Governor Macquarie was Australia's prominent Scottish colonial leader and it is fitting that we should celebrate his Scottish roots at his former residence. We would like this day to be an opportunity for Gaelic language and culture to again grace the building of Old Government House, and for visitors to experience that vibrant culture in this house," she said.

The link the house holds with Governor Macquarie is well known, as is Macquarie's role in what was basically an English colony. Perhaps not so well known are the distinctive qualities of the non-English culture that the man came from, according to Bran MacEachaidh, musical director of The Australian Gaelic Singers.

The National Trust is Australia's oldest conservation organisation. It is not-for-profit and independent, relying on support from its members and the community to assist its work – which includes advocacy for the protection of built, natural and cultural heritage, conservation and education.

“The place of Gaels in early Australian history has tended to be regarded as merely part of a generic ‘British’ influence; it is often forgotten that the Highlanders, many of whom came to Australia because their own homes were taken from them, had a distinctive language, culture and code of behaviour that was suppressed and oppressed for many centuries. Even today in our ‘multicultural’ society it is difficult to gain recognition for these people who played a significant role in developing the Australian character,” he said.

More than shortbread and bagpipes

“There is certainly more to Gaelic Scotland than pipe bands and shortbread. Wonderful though those things are, we would like this day at Old Government House to give all those who come into contact with it a chance to see, hear, taste and feel the culture that gave rise to them, and to know a little more of its historical connection to us,” he added.

Lachlan Macquarie was born in January 1762 on the island of Ulva in the parish of Lilinian in the Inner Hebrides, Scotland. His father, Lachlan snr., was a cousin of the 16th and last chieftain of the Macquarie clan.

Macquarie met his second wife Elizabeth – a kinswoman of Campbell of Airds -- at his uncle’s estate, Lochbuy. When Macquarie arrived in the Australian colony in 1810 he set about transforming the simple Georgian Government House built by Governor Hunter in 1799, into a classical structure with the look and feel of a country estate.

Today the house has been interpreted to the way it was in 1821, reflecting the taste and style of Mrs. Macquarie in the home loved and embellished by the Macquaries from 1810-1822.

Admission for the Gaelic musical afternoon costs \$10 adults, \$8 concession and National Trust members. Children under 12 are free. For more information, call OGH on 9635 8149.

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