

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 6 May

For Immediate Release

The Story of Franklin's London uncovers London's Hidden Small Historic Houses in June 2009

As part of the Story of London in June 2009, Benjamin Franklin House presents Franklin's London story through a variety of special events, taking place throughout the month, which will also see the launch of a group celebrating London's hidden gems: London Shh! (Small Historic Houses). Benjamin Franklin House, in Craven Street, WC2, will host an exhibition dedicated to six of London's Small Historic Houses, the founder members of London Shh! throughout June, as well as four days of new special events, outlined below.

The House, at 36 Craven Street, provides a fascinating contribution to London's unique history. Built circa 1730, it forms part of a terrace of Georgian townhouses in a quiet street just off the Strand. Although the interiors of most other buildings in Craven Street have been modernised, Benjamin Franklin House continues to provide a beautiful example of the classic, wood-panelled architecture of a workaday Georgian home. Franklin lived in London for nearly 16 years between 1757-1775. His main occupation during this time was mediating unrest between Britain and America, but he also: pursued his love of science (exploring bifocal spectacles and the energy-saving Franklin stove); furthered health (innoculation, air baths, cures for the

common cold); music (inventing the delightful glass armonica for which Mozart, Bach and Beethoven composed) and letters (articles, epitaphs, and his witty Craven Street Gazette), all while forging a hearty social life and close friendships with leading figures of the day.

On Wednesday 3 June at 6:30pm, the House hosts a lecture by Lady Joan Reid, the UK's foremost Franklin expert, on Franklin's London social life, illuminating the rich exchange between Franklin and his fascinating London friends, like father of chemistry Joseph Priestley, doctor John Pringle, and publisher Peter Collinson. Saturday 6 June will see a guided walk, starting at 11am, revealing the remains of eighteenth century Westminster, and the places Franklin visited in Enlightenment London. For the Lives of Buildings Weekend on 27 and 28 June, special behind the scenes tours will accompany the House's groundbreaking Historical Experience, giving visitors access to the upper floors of the House, and detailing the history of the building following Franklin's day: the anatomy school and the grisly remnants found in the basements following the House's conservation; Victorian renovations and their slanting effect on the House's structure; and the bomb that hit the House (but thankfully didn't explode) during World War Two.

Benjamin Franklin House represents a key part of London history – when Britain and America were still one, in a particularly momentous period in world history, the Age of Enlightenment.

Tickets for all events can be booked on 020 7839 2006, or by emailing info@benjaminfranklinhouse.org. Places are limited, so please book early.

More information on London Shh!, a group of six Small Historic Houses, will be available soon.



For more information and high res images, please visit our website at http://www.benjaminfranklinhouse.org/site/sections/about_house/press.html or contact Sarah Chaney, Marketing & Development Manager, on 020 7839 2006 or sarah@benjaminfranklinhouse.org

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Notes to Editors

1. Benjamin Franklin House is located at 36 Craven Street, WC2N 5NF. Opened to the public on Franklin's 300th birthday, 17th January 2006, the House exists as a new kind of museum, using cutting edge technology in the Historical Experience, enriching educational experiences through its free schools programme, and providing regular special events and lectures.
2. **Franklin's London: A Guided Walk Through 18th Century Westminster**
Saturday 6 June, 11am start, outside Benjamin Franklin House

A walking tour covering the areas frequented by Benjamin Franklin during his time in London and Westminster. The walk encompasses places frequented by Franklin; among others Whitehall, the Royal Society of Arts and St Bride's Church, Fleet Street.

The walk will finish at Benjamin Franklin House in time for the Historical Experience, the House's innovative show which presents the excitement and uncertainty of Franklin's London years using rooms where so much took place as staging for a drama which seamlessly integrates live performance, cutting edge lighting, sound and projection technology. Special offer tickets for the show will be available for all walkers.

Tickets cost £8 (£5 concessions), and can be booked in advance on 020 7839 2006 or info@benjaminfranklinhouse.org.

**Enlightening Friendships: Franklin and his London Milieu
Wednesday 3rd June, 6:30pm**

An illustrated talk on Franklin's social life in London, 1757 – 1775, in the only remaining Franklin home in the world – Benjamin Franklin House in Craven Street.

House Franklin scholar, Lady Joan Reid illuminates the rich exchange between Franklin and his fascinating London friends, like father of chemistry Joseph Priestley, doctor John Pringle, and publisher Peter Collinson.

Tickets cost £5 (£3.50 concessions), including refreshments, and can be booked in advance on 020 7839 2006 or info@benjaminfranklinhouse.org.

**The Lives of Buildings: Franklin, Hewson and Life at 36 Craven Street, Saturday 27/Sunday 28 June
Shows start at 12, 1, 2, 3:15 and 4:15pm**

The Historical Experience explores Grade I listed, Georgian Benjamin Franklin House, built circa 1730 and remarkable for its original features. It uses the rooms where so much took place as staging for a drama which seamlessly integrates live performance, cutting edge lighting, sound and projection technology to relate the story of Franklin's London life. For the Lives of Buildings weekend, visitors to the Historical Experience will view the House's upper floors, usually closed to the public, experiencing fully this eccentric building, whose beautiful conservation has been recognised by the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Georgian Group, and discover more about other Craven Street residents: like William and Polly Hewson and Margaret Stevenson.

Tickets cost £7 (£5 concessions), and can be booked in advance on our website, www.benjaminfranklinhouse.org, or the box office on 020 7925 1405.

3. The House is open to the public every day except Tuesdays, with historical and architectural guided tours on Mondays (priced £3.50), the Historical Experience Wednesday – Sunday (£7 adults, £5

concessions, free for under 16s, running at 12pm, 1pm, 2pm, 3:15 and 4:15). There is a small shop onsite.