

Happy 301st Ben! Happy Birthday Benjamin Franklin House!

Today is the 301st anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's 301st birthday and today Benjamin Franklin House has been open to the public for one year!

Just 12 months ago this, his only remaining home, a Grade I Georgian building, which had long been derelict, opened to a wide audience for the first time. What a first year it has been!

- Nearly 10,000 visitors came to Craven Street – more than had ever visited the House in its own nearly 300 years of existence.
- Of that number over 8000 ventured on the Historical Experience, the House's prime offering which brings Franklin's London story to life – one of the most pivotal periods of his long years – for a broad public through live interpretation and cutting edge sound, lighting, and visual projection. Franklin was chief colonial agent in Britain and the House served as the first de facto American Embassy. He worked tirelessly to keep Britain and America together under the Crown and though unsuccessful he forged an enduring relationship between the US and UK that is a source of strength for both nations today. Like Franklin, the four star Historical Experience breaks new ground. It is 'museum as theatre', like nothing you have seen before; and surely something you won't forget.
- Some 1200 children came to Benjamin Franklin House on our weekly student free day to discover Franklin's relevance in our time. The highlight of these visits is our Student Science Centre which provides hands-on exploration of Franklin's London science.
- From lightning to the glass armonica, the ingenious instrument he developed at Craven Street for which Beethoven and Mozart composed, young people are encouraged to think and test. They are supported through an annual Benjamin Franklin Science Fair and by class visits from our Educational Officer, who ventures out weekly with her Benjamin Franklin Travelling Suitcase
- We have had an average of 200 hits per week on our excellent website at www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org
- We have received a 2006 award from the Royal Society of British Architects for the conservation work
- We are so grateful for a matching grant of \$150,000 from the Pew Foundation supported by Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Smith and the Benjamin Franklin House Foundation
- Garnered blue chip press including from CNN, Time Magazine, National Public Radio, The New York Times, Town and Country, the BBC, London's Sunday Times, and more

So we have made wonderful strides. Yet there is still much to do. We are working to increase awareness of the House and its offerings through guidebooks, tour operators, event organizers, and the like in order to expand visitor numbers further. And we must move toward generating a significant endowment of approximately £4 million (\$8 million) to cover annual expenditure and ensure the long-term sustainability of the building and its aims.

Benjamin Franklin still has so much to teach us in the 21st century. One of his most enduring quotes is "Resolve to perform what you ought." That is just what a small and dedicated team did to bring the dream of Benjamin Franklin House to life as a dynamic museum and educational facility. He also said "perform without fail what you resolve." With your help, I know we can do just that.