

The Craven Street Gazette


Benjamin Franklin House • Issue 10 • 2004/2005

Britain's Heritage Lottery Fund Awards Grant of nearly £1 million

Thanks to an award of almost £1 million from Britain's Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), it is all systems go to open the doors of the world's only remaining Franklin home to the public – for the first time – as a dynamic museum and educational facility in January 2006 to coincide with the 300th anniversary of Franklin's birth. We are now actively working to raise the additional funding of approximately £400,000 required by the HLF.

According to Sue Bowers, HLF Regional Manager for London, 'Benjamin Franklin is one of the great figures who have shaped London's proud heritage and [created] a firm foundation [for] the special relationship between Britain and America.'

The £984,500 HLF award will help us complete interior conservation of the Grade I (Britain's highest heritage rating) terrace house – three of five floors are still derelict – and implement the Historical Experience, Student Science Centre, and Scholarship Centre. These offerings will bring to life the richness of Franklin's nearly sixteen years on Craven Street (1757-1762 and then back to Pennsylvania, with a return from 1764-1775) and spur the tenacity, inquisitiveness and Anglo-American cooperation which characterised his work in science, diplomacy, letters, music and more during his London tenure.

 Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

The Historical Experience will be the public's primary interface with Benjamin Franklin House. The 'museum as theatre' approach – using live interpretation, sound, and lighting, not being used elsewhere in London – will provide a fascinating glimpse into Benjamin Franklin's Enlightenment world. Our plans, well-received in extensive consultations we have conducted, are fresh and remove the traditional distance between visitor and history by creating a virtual stage in each of the historic rooms. Cisco Corporation is serving as an important technology partner.

The Student Science Centre will allow young people to explore Franklin science through hands-on activities, encouraging them to think, question, and test through the model of Franklin, who translated scientific inquisitiveness

into useful devices like the lightning rod. Our innovative business plan provides for one day per week when the House and the Student Science Centre is open, free of charge, to our core educational constituency of inner city schools. We will build on ties with teachers, developed since beginning our annual Benjamin Franklin Science Fair, and provide them with extensive support before, during and after the visit to ensure maximum educational value.

The Scholarship Centre, with its full set of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin in print and CD-Rom (made possible through a gift from the US Embassy London), will be an excellent source for individuals seeking information about Franklin and the myriad subjects with which he was involved. We will also conduct lectures on Franklin-related subjects carrying forward the annual Benjamin

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The recent Heritage Lottery Fund grant will ensure all remaining conservation of the House, including the Scholarship Centre floor (left) and the Student Science Centre (below)



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Franklin House Symposium; provide support and a 'home base' to visiting scholars; and develop on-line resources for a global public.

After opening we can also progress other outreach activities already underway, including with St Martin-in-the-Fields Social Care unit. For these London neighbours, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, we have provided lectures, walking tours and writing sessions based on Franklin's autobiography.

As the HLF's Sue Bowers notes, '[we are] delighted...to support this project because it will preserve an important part of London's architectural heritage and bring Franklin's many achievements in the capital to life for all.

This academic and public resource will provide an illuminating insight to Franklin's important contribution to

the capital's rich heritage.'

Thanks to HLF support – and assistance from numerous other foundations, corporations and individuals – we can conserve an irreplaceable heritage site and captivate visitors by breaking new ground in historical interpretation, placing the building, and the developments within it, in context.

Franklin said of his work, 'I was born two hundred years too soon - something will made of all this.' Benjamin Franklin House, built in and inspired by the 18th century, will engage those in the 21st.

The Board, Director, Project Management Team, and countless others will be working hard over the next year to make vision a reality. Stay tuned! If you'd like to know more, email us at BenjaminFranklinHouse@msn.com.

Benjamin Franklin House Partners with the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary

Our goal is to open Benjamin Franklin House to the public for 17 January 2006! Our efforts are mirrored by those of the



Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, based in Philadelphia, which has been charged by the United States Congress with organising the official US national celebration. We will be exploring joint activities in London during 2006 and beyond including lectures, exhibitions, and other events, involving other UK partners like the British Library, who hold Franklin artefacts.

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary's mission is to commemorate Ben Franklin's achievements and continue his legacy. The centerpiece will be an international travelling exhibition called *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*. This exhibition is now being guided by Dr. Page Talbott through the design development phase and will showcase over 250 original items – including many owned by Franklin's own family and never publicly on display before. It will also feature over forty interactive devices and original copies of all five of America's founding documents, as part of a unique and seamless fusion of historical artefacts and hands-on experience.

According to Dr. Rosalind Remer, the Tercentenary's Executive Director, the US exhibition will premiere on 15 December 2005 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia before travelling to five other cities in the US. Part of the kick-off exhibition will be a panel on 36 Craven Street! You can find out more about Tercentenary plans at www.benfranklin300.org.

Armonica Concert Accompanies House Photographic Exhibition



Thomas Bloch at the Armonica



One of Michael De Guzman's photographic studies of the House

A London gallery in summer 2004 was the site for a joint Franklin Armonica concert, featuring talented French musician Thomas Bloch, and a photography exhibition, showcasing images of 36 Craven Street taken by Benjamin Franklin House scholar, Michael De Guzman.

Benjamin Franklin House Science Fair



The 2003/2004 Benjamin Franklin House Science Fair reached over 200 students bringing together young people from Tower Hamlets, King's Cross and Westminster schools with their counterparts at the American Community School in Surrey to work on such Franklin-related questions as: 'How do you get more heat from less fuel?' Students developed over 50 projects touching on such Franklin themes as electricity, weather/meteorology, hydrodynamics, measurement, and wind energy.

News and Events

Major new grants have been received from the **Equitable Trust, Hugh Stevenson Family Trust, P&O**, and the **Royal Society of Arts (RSA)**.

The annual 4th of July picnic, hosted by House supporter, the **American Society of London**, on the grounds of Winfield House, the **US Ambassador's**



residence, had a special guest: Benjamin Franklin! A local actor dressed the part and handed out literature about Benjamin Franklin House to the large gathering.

Ties with the **University of Pennsylvania** were strengthened when Penn **Professor Rick Beeman** (right) provided the opening address of last year's Symposium on Benjamin Franklin and the Human Genome. In 2004, Franklin historian **Lady Joan Reid** and Director **Dr. Márcia Balisciano** delivered lectures at Penn to the school's Benjamin Franklin scholars, hosted by **Professor Daniel K. Richter**, (right) Director of Penn's McNeil Center for Early American Studies.



The theme of the **2004 Benjamin Franklin House Symposium** held on 20 October 2004 at the RSA was 'Benjamin Franklin and the Transatlantic Relationship in Global Affairs.' Timed just prior to the US presidential election it featured the historical development, current status, and likely evolution of the strategic partnership between Britain and America. Franklin can be considered an architect of the so-called special relationship between the two nations. Participants were asked to explore whether recent events tested its durability or whether it is unshakeable – immune to the whims of personality and administration? Speakers included:

- Media personality and business leader, **Loyd Grossman**
- Director of Markets and Exchanges, Financial Services Authority, **Gay Huey Evans**
- Chargé de Affaires, US Embassy London, **David Johnson**
- Chairman of the Royal Society of Arts, **Sir Paul Judge**
- Director of the Eccles Centre for American Studies, British Library, **Dr. Philip Davies**
- London Bureau Chief, *International Herald Tribune*, **Eric Pfanner**
- Franklin historian and Benjamin Franklin House Governor **Lady Joan Reid**
- **Professor Robert Worcester**, founder of MORI and member of the Royal Society's Science and Society Committee.



The RSA Great Room, setting for the annual Benjamin Franklin House Symposium



Since our last edition of the *Gazette*, **London Mayor Ken Livingstone** paid a visit to 36 Craven Street. He came to learn about the conservation and design work underway, and to observe students working on diagrams of Ben's ingenious stove from one of our inner city partner schools, Westminster City, located not far from Benjamin Franklin House. As the Mayor noted, 'Benjamin Franklin was a quite astonishing man who was perhaps the greatest example of the long-standing sharing of history, culture and talent between the United Kingdom and the United States. This House, just off Trafalgar Square in the heart of the capital, is a monument to these links, and the completion of this project will ensure it becomes a vital stop on the itinerary of any American visitor to London.' Teacher Georgie Grosman (pictured) joined with Benjamin Franklin House Chairman Sir Bob Reid and others for this special event.

Benjamin Franklin and the Story of the Armonica

Joan Reid

IT IS WELL KNOWN that while Franklin was in London he developed a new musical instrument called the "Armonica." He must have heard the efforts of several musical hopefuls playing the "musical glasses," and realised their shortcomings. But who did Franklin hear?

There is a lovely story in *The Scots Magazine* of early 1760 about the fate of a gentleman called variously Richard Puckridge or Pockrich. He was an Irishman, described as a house builder, and bog-drainer, who ran through his inheritance, and came to England to make his fortune with his "Angelic Organ," a set of wine glasses tuned with water and fixed to a table. He tried Bath first and then made his way to London. He persuaded a young man called Pilkington to sing along with him, booked a performance hall and promoted a concert. Unfortunately a pig of some sort entered the hall



shortly before the concert, and upset and broke most of the glasses. Thus Pockrich and Pilkington failed to make any fortune.

Franklin may have heard him at some point. He had arrived in London in 1757, in advance of the promotion of Pockrich's musical glasses. But, the story has a tragic ending. Apparently the bog-draining musician was known to have unsavoury habits and Pockrich was reduced to penury in some city lodging. On 10 November 1759 he managed to set fire to his lodgings, which then burnt down thirteen other houses and shops, consuming him in the flames.

Franklin by 1762 had perfected his Armonica by grinding a series of glass bowls of graded sizes. These were strung on a metal spindle, turned by a handle or treadle, and rested in a metal lined cabinet with a water bowl nearby to enable the player to use both hands and all ten fingers. Gluck and Mozart among others, composed

several pieces for the Armonica, and it became a very popular drawing room instrument, mainly on the Continent, until its demise in the early nineteenth century. This was because of stories that players were contracting illnesses, and females in the audience were tending to swoon or faint during performances.

It was also recorded that Anton Mesmer used the instrument as the background to his hypnotising séances in Paris before the Revolution. Franklin, scientist Le Voisier, and none other than Dr Guillotin were the committee that pronounced Mr. Mesmer a quack and fraud.

The Armonica is alive and well, in the twenty-first century, with players in the USA, France and the UK giving concerts (including to a gathering of Benjamin Franklin House supporters in 2004) with new composers and innovative parts to play. And no one so far has managed to faint.



Benjamin Franklin House

The Friends of Benjamin Franklin House is a membership organisation responsible for opening 36 Craven Street to the public. We rely on voluntary contributions to achieve the potential of the world's last remaining Franklin home.

If you would like more information about the project and how you can join us, please contact: Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NF.

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