

Benjamin Franklin House Open!

ON 17 JANUARY 2006 – Benjamin Franklin's 300th birthday – the dream of the world's only remaining Franklin home opening to the public as a dynamic museum and educational facility became a reality! Franklin would not have had it any other way: the coalescing of two milestone happenings.

That evening – before a gala celebration sponsored by HSBC at London's Royal Palace, The Banqueting House – then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and US Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, Robert Tuttle, cut the ribbon to formally open 36 Craven Street, which served as the first de facto American Embassy. During his nearly 16 years in London, Franklin sought a way of keeping Britain and America together under the Crown. Though unsuccessful, he planted durable seeds of a 'special relationship' that is a source of strength for both nations.

The practical work-a-day Georgian building, once in peril, suited Franklin in his many activities in London from diplomacy, science, invention, letters, and even music. Conserved by numerous craftspeople, who all seemed to become enchanted by its history and potential, the House has been returned to its 18th century lustre.

In this, the world's only remaining Franklin home built circa 1730, an essential Anglo-American heritage site and the largest existing Franklin artefact, the original interiors now speak of the past for the benefit of future generations. Already Benjamin Franklin House has drawn nearly 10,000 visitors from Britain, America and farther afield.

We were guided by Benjamin Franklin who remarked he was born too soon: something would be made of his pioneering life. Consequently, our primary offering, the unique **Historical Experience**, sensitively integrates 21st century technology into the original fabric of the building. It uses the period spaces where so much took place as stage,



Benjamin Franklin House now speaks of the past to future generations.

blending live interpretation, leading edge sound, lighting, and visual projection to tell the rich story of Franklin in London in his own words. According to magazine *Time Out*, The Historical Experience is "A Grade I listed building, beautifully restored.... It's a short, intense experience.... You'll come away with a strong sense of the man and the times in which he lived."

The **Student Science Centre** inspires young people through hands-on science from Franklin's London years, when his investigations traversed everything from canal depths and daylight savings time to fuel efficiency and oxygen. Our annual Benjamin Franklin Science Fair brings American and British children together allowing them to express their creativity and shared history.

The **Robert H. Smith Scholarship Centre** is a focal point in Europe for study of the myriad

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subjects with which Franklin was associated, and features a full set of the Franklin Papers. From this hub at the top of the House we are fostering modern, Enlightenment debate. The 2006 Benjamin Franklin House Symposium brought leading minds together at the British Library's Eccles Centre for American Studies to explore pivotal issues linked to Franklin.

Opening was made possible by the generosity of so many, first among them the Heritage Lottery Fund; Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Smith who have endowed the Scholarship Centre and continue to provide strategic support; John Studzinski who believed in and assisted the project from its early days; the CHC Helicopter Corporation; the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Foundation who claim Franklin as the father of electricity; the Architectural Heritage Fund; and countless others, many of whom are listed on our website at www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org.

Our tireless project management team and advisors – including architect Patrick Dillon and Quantity Surveyor Burke Hunter Adams; pro bono counsel Morrison and Foerster; Historical Experience and Student Science Centre designers Event Communications and Screenhouse Productions – ensured we stayed on time and within budget, executing the highest standards of conservation while creating a groundbreaking tribute to one of history's great figures.

Staff were resourceful and indispensable – moving in and out of Craven Street at a moment's notice, with no discontinuity in delivery or cheerfulness, including House Administrator Rowena Tee and Education Officer Ana Doria Buchan. Key team member Michael De Guzman over several years was a daily presence in the House with no task beyond him.

Our board lent expertise in every possible area – from historical research to finance, fundraising, IT, and communications – providing the governance and critical direction that made opening a reality. Among them is Anne Keigher. Project Management Team Chair, architect, and design consultant, she set a benchmark for excellence and dedication. And overseeing all was our Franklinesque Chairman, Sir Bob Reid who, with unflagging belief and wit, always found positive solutions.

Benjamin Franklin said “Perform what you



Then UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and US Ambassador Robert Tuttle formally open Benjamin Franklin House on Franklin's 300th birthday.



Gala Opening celebration at London's Royal Palace, The Banqueting House.



Alasdair Malloy playing the glass armonica at the Opening Gala.

ought.” For me, it has been an honour to be involved with the project. Its fulfilment is indeed that of a dream. “Perform without fail what you resolve” is something that Franklin also said. Looking ahead we will not be complacent and continue to work hard to advance the educational aims of Benjamin Franklin House. We are thus launching an endowment campaign to raise at least £4 million over the next few years to ensure the long-term future of this priceless heritage asset.

Márcia Balisciano

To find out more contact info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org.

Inspiring Young Minds through Franklin Science

UNDER THE DIRECTION of Education Officer Ana Doria Buchan, the **Student Science Centre** has engaged more than 1000 children from some 30 schools, particularly from inner city London boroughs such as Tower Hamlets and Lewisham.



'Polly', daughter of Franklin's landlady, leads students on a journey through the House's historic rooms.

Young visitors take a journey with Polly, daughter of Franklin's landlady, to whom he wrote some of his most important letters on science. They investigate the House's historic rooms discovering information about Franklin and 18th century London life that complements Key Stage II of the British National Curriculum with its focus on science, history, technology and citizenship.

They also explore the second floor **Student Science Centre** where they are encouraged to hypothesise and test in the mode of Franklin.

In the **Medical History Room**, based on the medical research of William Hewson, Polly's husband (who established an anatomy school at 36 Craven Street) children try their hand at fun games which reference Hewson's important contributions to science.

In the **Discovery Room**, they are challenged to identify various objects relating to Craven Street science through engaging computer programs.

The **Demonstration Room** features task-led, hands-on experiments that supplement the other learning activities and reveal Franklin's scientific endeavours in the House. Dramatic audio-visual segments support the presentations, enabling children to explore 'what if' questions such as 'what happens if lightning strikes a building with



Circulation game in the Student Science Centre's Medical History Room.

no lightning conductor?

In addition to electricity, other hands on experiments encompass canal depths – Franklin developed pioneering ideas on hydrodynamics – and the glass armonica, the instrument Benjamin Franklin developed in the House for which Mozart and Beethoven, among others, composed.

Ana supports schools by bringing Ben's Travelling Suitcase (a valise filled with Franklin House-related items) to the classroom for one hour workshops.

Topics include forensic archaeology based on the Craven Street bones (over 1200 were found in the basement during structural repairs, remnants of William Hewson's anatomy school).

In May, partner schools were treated to a Benjamin Franklin Science Day at the Royal Society, Britain's primary science institute where Franklin was an early member. More than 150 pupils took part, captivated by sessions on Franklin magic squares; bifocals (an invention credited to Franklin) by Neil Handley, Curator of the British Optical Association Museum located on Craven Street; and an exciting electricity demonstration by scientist and Benjamin



Education Officer Ana Doria Buchan brings Ben's Travelling Suitcase to local schools in order to share Craven Street science.



2006 Science Fair participants from Cricket Green School.

Franklin House Science Advisory Group member, Dr. Bryson Gore.

The Benjamin Franklin Science Fair took place in July, allowing students to develop their own Franklin-inspired experiments. London children from special education school, Cricket Green, considered such questions as 'how can we get more energy from less fuel,' a problem Benjamin Franklin tried to solve at Craven Street by installing a damper in his study's fireplace.

Special family events in the year included a story telling day in August; a kite making afternoon in October; and an 18th century holiday gathering in December.

Looking ahead to 2007, Ana says there will be even more special events as well as continued outreach to foreign schools and adult learners from the University of the Third Age.



Franklin's Laboratory, left, before and below, after conservation, a key room visited by students.



The Student Science Centre is free to schools. We are grateful to National Grid and Credit Suisse for their support of our educational activities. To find out more email info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org.

Download the new Benjamin Franklin House brochure at www.benjaminfranklinhouse.org

Visit our shop for a range of Benjamin Franklin House items – www.benjaminfranklinhouse.org



Robert H. Smith Scholarship Centre Outreach

THE INTELLECTUAL HEART of Benjamin Franklin House is the **Robert H. Smith Scholarship Centre** which features a full set of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin and provides an inviting and inspirational environment for researchers and interns.

While the Scholarship Centre brings the public into Craven Street, outreach furthers knowledge and contemporary review of key Franklin themes. In autumn 2006, in association with the **Eccles Centre for American Studies** at the British Library, the Annual Symposium explored two of Franklin's great passions: science and letters with experts in their field: Lord Robert May on science and Kate Muir and Jonathan Fenby on letters.

Lord May, former President of the Royal Society, Professor of Zoology at Oxford University and Imperial University, and former government science advisor, concluded Benjamin Franklin's scientific contributions were ground-breaking because he was willing to break with convention and challenge pre-Enlightenment theories. Franklin's success, he argued, was achieved in a milieu ripe for discovery.



Lord Robert May, Kate Muir, Jonathan Fenby and Dr Márcia Balisciano at Franklin, Man of Science and Letters, the 2006 Benjamin Franklin House Symposium at the Eccles Centre for American Studies, British Library.

Kate Muir, columnist for *The Times* and author of books including *Left Bank*, drew a link between great female writers and Benjamin Franklin's writings and support of women. Franklin's first *nom de plume* was, of course, the feminine character, Silence Dogood.

Jonathan Fenby, formerly editor of the *London Observer* and the *South China Post*, and European Journalism Centre board member, pondered Franklin's model for tripartite relations between Britain, France and the United States, highlighting the tensions and strengths in the interaction between the three nations.

2006 Event Highlights

- * Press night for the American Correspondents in London
- * Joint program with the London Junto featuring Mark Skousen, author of *The Completed Biography*
- * American Independence Day Reception
- * London-Paris Festival Sponsor
- * Bipartisan voter registration drive hosted by Republicans and Democrats Abroad with support from the US Embassy London
- * Lecture for the American Friends of Franklin
- * *A Web of 18th Century Relationships*, art installation by Benjamin Franklin House staffer, Michael De Guzman
- * Holiday Open House

Coming in 2007

- * Winter - US State Department dinner in honour of US affiliate, Benjamin Franklin House Foundation
- * Spring - Benjamin Franklin House Science Day
- * Summer - Benjamin Franklin House Independence Day Celebration
- * Autumn - Benjamin Franklin House Annual Symposium



Bipartisan US Voter Registration Drive at Benjamin Franklin House.



Art installation in Franklin's Parlour: *A Web of 18th Century Relationships*.

From Monarchist to Patriot

THE LONDON CONVERSION OF BEN FRANKLIN, 1757 - 1775

Joan Reid

AS EARLY AS 1754, Benjamin Franklin had a plan to unite the American colonies under some form of presidential representative of the British King. When this proved unpopular with fellow colonists, he suggested a commonwealth drawing together the governmental experience of Britain with the potential riches of the American continent. Between 1754 to 1757, Franklin suffered a great deal of petty, factious arguments with the Assembly and the proprietors of Pennsylvania (the heirs of William Penn). He complained about the inability of both sides to work together. Though, when he was sent to London in 1757 as agent for Pennsylvania, he believed he was coming to the seat of enlightened government.

He considered himself at home in Britain, and, since he already had several friends in the printing and book trade, he easily settled into a comfortable, middle class intellectual life. He was admitted to the Society of Arts and the Royal Society, and mixed with fellow members. These were the people he judged to be the arbiters of philosophic discussion. He soon realised that dealing with the King's representatives tested his forbearance. It was not just the procrastinations that frustrated him, but the etiquette required to progress any royal plea. Such a state of affairs left him with little confidence in the government's colonial departments.



Benjamin Franklin, a wood carving by William Rush, Masonic Library, Philadelphia.

When George III was crowned in 1760, however, Franklin expressed optimism about the young king's personality and he enthusiastically attended his coronation.

After a brief return to Philadelphia, Franklin arrived back to London in 1764 with the new task of wresting Pennsylvania from its proprietors. He petitioned for for its conversion to a royal colony, still convinced that a benevolent monarchy would serve his compatriots best. He was soon thrown into the maelstrom of the Stamp Act, which passed shortly after his return. Although he disapproved of internal taxes, he advised the colonists to acquiesce, in part because he believed compliance would gain other concessions. But he gravely

underestimated home reaction to the Stamp Act and found himself before the House of Commons charged with explaining colonial resistance to mother country laws.

The Stamp Act was eventually repealed though Franklin found no calm water. The speed at which government ministers changed jobs and the maverick way in which they imposed colonial taxation, forced him to question his fundamental loyalty to a system inexorably pushing the colonies into rebellion. His reactions to the tensions were inconsistent. On the one hand, he did everything he could to seek reconciliatory measures; on the other, he broadcast private letters of government servants denigrating colonial activities. Enormous fury arose against him from both sides. Franklin ended up before the British Privy Council denounced almost as a traitor. It was this moment which sparked his transition from monarchist to patriot in support of the cause of American independence.

His sacrifice was not only public. He broke with his son, Royal Governor of New Jersey, and the relationship never recovered. However bitter and difficult Franklin found the breach with Britain and his son, he remained firm friends with a range of British correspondents and ended his life in Philadelphia, after eight years in France, writing optimistically again about the future of America and Britain, the two countries he loved.



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. Email: info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org

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The Friends of Benjamin Franklin House is a registered charity no. 276066.

