

Dear Friends,

In the march to open for the Franklin tercentenary on 17 January 2006 as a dynamic museum and educational facility, Benjamin Franklin House has been filled with activity as conservation and infrastructure work advances. So filled - with workers, equipment, cables, and dust - we learned on a Friday in early July, that despite our best intention to run our project office from 36 Craven Street as we have over the last five years, we would need to move out by the following week to accommodate the pace of work. Enter Sir Bob and Lady Reid, Benjamin Franklin House Chairman and Governor respectively, who (yet again) offered a helping hand, well, more specifically their dining room (!) across town, which we gladly accepted while we looked for a longer-term solution. (More about the Reids below).

Working without all our 'bits and pieces' - like files - has meant daily pilgrimages to the House where we can see the latest developments and do practical things such as collect mail. Like Benjamin Franklin, who seldom opted for progress in a linear fashion, our project is ever varied and fosters creative responses. The latter included an appeal to our kind neighbours, Rod and Mina McManigal (mentioned in my May countdown email as living at 30 Craven Street in a Georgian building once the haunt of early 19th century US Vice President, Aaron Burr). From August through October, when we can return to the House, the McManigals have agreed to let us set up shop in a flat in the lower level of their lovely home, complete with its own entrance. We are very grateful for their generosity and the ability to be so close to #36 and all that is happening there.

As Ben recalled in his Autobiography, his "industry" as a young printer was "visible to [his] neighbors" and gave him "character and credit;" we are happy that our own diligence has not escaped the McManigal's attention!

And on a note of industriousness, I'm pleased to say our new website is now live with the distribution of this email at [www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org](http://www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org) <<http://www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org>>. Many thanks to web guru Chris Attewell who helped us put it together - and many thanks to the Royal Society of Arts, where Franklin was first international member, for allowing us to post information about the project on their server for so many years. On the new site you will see many fine images taken by our Benjamin Franklin scholar/worker/artist in residence, Michael De Guzman, who, in addition to all his other duties, is conducting the photo and video documentation of the House's transformation. This is the first wave - we'll continue to make improvements in the months ahead. Please do share your feedback.

**\* People in the Project: Spotlight on Sir Bob and Lady Reid**

It would be difficult to enumerate all that Sir Bob and Lady (Joan) Reid have done for Benjamin Franklin House or likewise measure the invaluable encouragement they have given me personally. Given their down-to-earth Scottishness, they

would disclaim any description as a power couple, but their winning ability to deliver - whether major gifts; essential voluntary specialists; or calm consensus - and a sparkling partnership of wit, intelligence and love, means they are very much that. Their dining room is just the latest in a tranche of personal donations to the cause which has included books; computers; the time of Kathleen Murray, Sir Bob's patient and deft personal assistant; not to mention considerable financial support.

Living and raising a family in Borneo, Nigeria, Kenya, Bangkok and Melbourne while Sir Bob pursued his career in those exotic places, required a practical nature and flexibility, which Lady Reid had in abundance. During those years she taught in schools, ran seminars, established charities and became a professional careers advisor. Back in London, it was she who discovered Benjamin Franklin House while serving on the Council for the Royal Society of Arts which had taken an interest in the derelict House around the corner from the RSA's own 18th century building. Perhaps it was her passion for American history, cultivated as an early Fullbright scholar in Virginia, that ensured Lady Reid would become fully involved, soon recruiting her husband, whom she met when both were students at St. Andrews University. Such is her capacity for knowledge, she began extensive research into Franklin and today is considered a leading Franklin expert in Britain. She is also Founder and Chair of the Unicorn School for Dyslexic Children, Chairman of Club L International, a Trustee of YMCA College and the London Mozart Players, and former Chairmain of the British Federation of Women Graduates Charitable Foundation.

Besides being one of the best one-armed golfers in Britain, Sir Bob is also one of the nation's most respected business leaders. Relentlessly positive, with an always elfish smile and supportive phrase ("good on you" is a favourite), he has led the Board of Benjamin Franklin House to achievement. He is Chairman of the International Petroleum Exchange, Avis Europe, the Milton Keynes Partnership, the Foundation for Young Musicians, and St. Edwards School Oxford and is a non-executive director of Siemens UK and Sun Life Canada. He is formerly Deputy Governor of the Bank of Scotland, Director of HBOS, and Chairman of Shell UK, British Railways, Sears and London Electricity. He holds an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law from the University of Kent, was elected to Scotland's National Academy and is former Chancellor of Robert Gordon University.

#### **\* July news**

##### *First Disbursement of Heritage Lottery Fund £984,500 grant*

Britain's Heritage Lottery Fund is our largest project donor; their most recent grant in 2004 was the catalyst allowing us to begin all remaining work in May needed to open the House to the public with a 'museum as theatre' Historical Experience, Student Science Centre that allows young people to test and try, and

a Scholarship Centre that promotes contemporary study of the many subjects with which Franklin was associated. Payment of the HLF gift is in arrears - a percentage of the total of approved invoices - and we received our first grant distribution of £74,000 this month. (Full project costs for work underway, not accounting for on-going overheads, volunteer labour, or 'sunk costs,' i.e., work already completed, is £1.4 million - we have a shortfall of just under £200,000 which will be covered by a fixed interest loan from Britain's Architectural Heritage Fund, though we are actively fundraising for this balance.)

*New Gifts from Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Foundation and US Embassy London Contribute to \$100,000 US Challenge*

The IEEE Foundation was our first donor to Phase II - the opening of the House - with a gift of \$100,000 toward Franklin's laboratory on the Historical Experience and designs for the Student Science Centre (Phase I, completed by 2000 with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Getty Foundation, and the William Hewlett Trust, ensured the exterior stabilisation of the building). In support of the \$100,000 Challenge from our primary US donor - if we raise \$100,000 we will receive an additional \$100,000 - the IEEE Foundation has announced an award of \$39,254 for build-out of the Student Science Centre.

The US Embassy London has also this month announced a gift of approximately \$5000 toward the Student Science Centre (£154,000 of our total remaining project costs) which will also count toward the US Challenge. The US Embassy London have been unflagging in their support. Since 2001 they have contributed \$25,000 toward conservation work on the first two floors of the building and the purchase of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin House from Yale University; we will take delivery of these bound volumes for the top floor Scholarship Centre, with its central room, the Robert H. Smith Study Centre, once the 18th century floor boards are reinstated this autumn.

*Student Science Centre Outreach Programme with Westminster City School*

Dr. Bryson Gore, a member of our Science Advisory Group, led a compelling demonstration of Franklin science and some of the exciting discoveries which followed, for a group of 25 'Year 8' boys at Westminster City School. There were enough bangs and sparks to keep students riveted. Westminster City, an urban school with an ethnically diverse student population, is a key educational partner located in our own borough of London. Next year the boys will be among the first to try out the Student Science Centre featuring hands-on Franklin science from electricity to hydrodynamics.

*Fourth of July Event Spreads Awareness of Benjamin Franklin House*

At the annual American Society of London picnic at Winfield House, the US Ambassador's residence, we had a Benjamin Franklin House stand where

visitors could learn more about the project. They could also try a makeshift Franklin armonica demonstration; this is the instrument Franklin developed in the House for which Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven composed! Perhaps the biggest draw to the stand, however, was a delicious cake in the shape of an American flag made by long-standing supporter, Mary Olsen. Mary is arranging a concert in London next year as part of our opening festivities and I will have more news on that in the months to come.

### *A Discovery Under the Floor Boards*

No, we did not discover more bones. We found a perfectly preserved "Players Navy Cut" cardboard cigarette box (minus its contents) with a picture of a sailor wearing a cap emblazoned with the word 'hero.' It seems to date from the late 19th/early 20th century as does a small section of wallpaper found behind paneling on a false wall erected by the Victorians. In 1998 we found over 1200 human bones while doing plumbing repairs in the basement, the remnants of an anatomy school run by the son-in-law of Franklin's landlady circa 1770-1774. The bones are being researched at London's Institute of Archaeology and hence one of the key rooms in the second floor Student Science Centre is dedicated to medical history, while the Historical Experience will begin with references to the Craven Street bones.

Benjamin Franklin knew all about living in uncertain times, particularly his later years in London on the brink of the Revolutionary War when he was still lobbying for peaceful reconciliation between Britain and the colonies. This month our great city has faced senseless acts of terrorism that tragically affected many lives; but it is also a resilient city with a long history and a vibrant future. During the month we also discovered that the 2012 Olympics will come to London.

Benjamin Franklin House, just steps from Trafalgar Square, will no doubt have a special role to play in receiving many visitors to those triumphant games.

With all best wishes,

Márcia

Dr. M. Balisciano  
Director  
Benjamin Franklin House  
36 Craven Street  
London WC2N 5NF  
+44 (0)20 7930 9121 - telephone  
+44 (0)20 7930 9124 - facsimile