

Benjamin Franklin House

From: Benjamin Franklin House [info@benjaminfranklinhouse.org]

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From left, children coaxing sound from Franklin's glass armonica in the [Student Science Centre](#); new poster promoting the [Historical Experience](#) designed by Richmond University students; introducing monthly Monday lunchtime lectures - here rapt attention for [Education](#) Manager Rob Taylor's talk on Gin and Vice in Georgian London

Benjamin Franklin House eGazette 2009 - 1st Quarter

"Is not the Pleasure of fair Weather owing to the Unpleasantness of foul? Certainly. Were it then always Spring, were the Fields always green and flourishing, and the Weather constantly serene and fair...it would cease to be Pleasure to us." Benjamin Franklin, 1725

Greetings,

We begin spring having had a very productive winter. Visitor numbers on the Historical Experience have been growing. We increased capacity between January and the close of March by 40% over 2008. Feedback, which we've been sharing on our [homepage](#), has been excellent. This comment from 12 March is exemplary: "Moving, wonderful, thought provoking - about a true historical hero."

New educational activities in the quarter included school break week - for five mornings children came to both learn and play 18th century inspired games. We will have more than 30 events this year. Recent highlights include the latest in our Inventive Series: a February comedy night featuring comics who tested their Franklin wit.

Preserving the House is an essential obligation, and, in early March, the 18th century staircase was given some important attention by experts, Holden Conservation, key members of our original project team. The stairs, which have supported over 20,000 people since opening in 2006, are the path to discovering the building and its fascinating history. Franklin said he walked up and down them for exercise!

To officially launch our endowment campaign, A World of Possibilities, on 3 June we will be holding a very special event in Washington, DC, in the company of campaign Chairman, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, British Ambassador to the United States. In collaboration with the US [Benjamin Franklin House Foundation](#), it will take place at the new landmark [Newseum](#), which stands like Franklin for a free press. The event is made possible by key Newseum and House supporters, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Smith. Can you join us? Contact [me](#) for details.

Please read on for more recent House news!

Education

*Each Tuesday the House is open free of charge to school groups, many from London's poorest neighbourhoods. We are fully booked for educational visits through the start of summer!

*While our core concentration is Key Stage I students (8-12 year olds), we have introduced new activities for younger children, enjoyed in March by 5 and 6 year olds from London's St. Jude's Primary School, Brookfield Primary, and St. Mary's Primary School. We are also engaging older children, including a group from Southbank International School, who held a Franklin-inspired debate on free speech in February.

* During National Science and Engineering week in March we held The House of Invention: Benjamin Franklin and Scientific Change. The free open day, supported by the Institute of Physics, allowed young people to explore Franklin's London science in the Student Science Centre.

Events

*While decadence in Georgian London was the theme for our kick-off Monday Lunchtime Lecture in January, in February, in honour of George Washington's birthday, Marketing and Development Manager, Sarah Chaney, explored whether Franklin's friend and fellow Founding Father was accidentally bled to death, the result of a cure gone wrong. In March, the House's Alice Kershaw, Operations Manager, linked Franklin's famous and dangerous discovery of lightning as 'electrical fluid' with his role as a political firebrand. Clips can be found on Benjamin Franklin House's [YouTube Channel](#).

*On 25 March, House Historian, Lady Joan Reid, discussed Shaping America: Franklin and the Constitution, highlighting Franklin's role in crafting the US Constitution, one of his most enduring legacies.

*Upcoming events include:

How Georgian Britain's Worst Husband Met His Match, **20 April**, 1pm (£5/£3.50 Friends/Concessions); our next Comedy Night takes place on **22 April**, 6:30pm (£8/£5 Friends/Concessions); Late Night at Benjamin Franklin House - evening runs of the Historical Experience, **15 May** (£7, £5 concessions) 6:15pm and 7:15pm; The Craven Street Bones, Museums & Galleries at Night, **16 May**, 8pm and 9pm (£10, £8 concessions including wine); Franklin and Polly Hewson: A Second Daughter, **18 May**, 1pm (£5/£3.50 Friends/Concessions); and Enlightening Friendships: Franklin and his London Milieu, **3 June**, 6:30pm (£5/£3.50 Friends/Concessions).

To book: call 020 7839 2006 or email info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org. Click [here](#) for a full list of upcoming events.

*On 22 June, the House will be the place for Rivers Baghdad, the first part of an exhibition on the universal theme of water, projected live in the city of Baghdad and globally streamed to private and public screens using mobile phone technology and the Internet. Watch for more news soon on our website.

Benjamin Franklin House Foundation

*The Foundation is supporting Andrea Wulf's book launch of [The Brother Gardeners](#) at the [Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies](#) at Monticello on 13 May. Andrea's book details the 18th century rise of the British passion for gardening. She is a member of our Literary Prize review panel and held the UK book launch at the House last spring.

*Plans for a new Sister Schools initiative in collaboration with the US [Benjamin Franklin House Foundation](#) are taking shape. We hope to launch the pilot later this year, connecting students from our London partner schools with their counterparts in America to share information about themselves, their cultures, and studies. The programme will be a testament to Franklin's belief in international understanding and engagement!

Support for the House

*In the last quarter, Benjamin Franklin House gratefully received grants from the The Beneficia Foundation; Museums, Libraries and Archives Council; and the John Lyons Trust.

*In February, we submitted a comprehensive proposal for a \$1 million grant to the National Endowment for the Humanities to advance the World of Possibilities endowment campaign. It was bolstered by recommendations from a number of supporters, including members of our honorary Educational Panel, including Roy E. Goodman of the Franklin-founded American Philosophical Society and Franklin biographer Professor H W Brands of the University of Texas. We expect a decision in September; if successful, we will be required to raise \$3 million in matching funds. To ensure the long-term future of the House and its educational aims, and to generate sufficient interest income, we believe a total endowment of \$8 million endowment is necessary. Contact [me](#) to find out more.

* Because the endowment is a long-term effort, we need ongoing support to maintain the House's exciting programming. Our Friends programme is therefore essential –and growing! You can become a Friend of Benjamin Franklin House with a gift of £25 and above and receive numerous benefits, including free entry to the House. Our next Friends evening will take place at Craven Street on 7 May; join [us](#)!

*You can support Benjamin Franklin House at no cost when shopping online with over 600 popular retailers, including Amazon, and many more: <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/benjaminfranklin>. You can also raise funds for the House when you search the Web with easysearch: <http://benjaminfranklin.easysearch.org.uk>!

2009 Benjamin Franklin House Literary Prize

The two winners of the 2008 Literary Prize, Anthony Casanova and James Tanner received their awards at a January reception and dinner at the House hosted by Chairman John Studzinski, attended by Guy Black of media partner [The Telegraph](#), along with Maev Kennedy from The Guardian, and Peter York who writes for The Independent and Harpers and Queen, among others. Catering was donated by [Lodge](#). The 2009 prize, launching soon, will ask for interpretations of the Franklin quote: "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." Click [here](#) for how to enter.

Benjamin Franklin House in the News

*ABC Television, on behalf of Good Morning America, filmed the House for a segment that will air this spring on hidden London!

*The House served as a backdrop for a UK Channel 4 documentary on a member of the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother's retinue!

*The Student Science Centre's Franklin lightning experiment featured in an episode of Channel 4's series, Christianity: A History!

* The House was featured in Time Out's list of secret UK museums!

*In keeping with Franklin's passion for technology, Benjamin Franklin House is now on Twitter - [sign up](#) and follow us! And in more new media, bloggers are sharing information about Benjamin Franklin House. See, for example, this [entry](#) posted by an attendee of our opening Lunchtime Lecture!

*We received pro bono press support from [Pear Tree PR](#) last month!

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As the month drew to a close, friends gathered at the House to celebrate my tenth anniversary as Director of Benjamin Franklin House. It is an honour and a privilege to be associated with such a special place; one of history's greatest figures; and so many inspiring people - from our Board, staff, and supporters - past and present. My favourite Franklin quotes are: "Perform what you ought" and "Perform without fail what you resolve." This is what I will strive to continue to do.

Márcia

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*Hire Benjamin Franklin House for your events; contact Sarah Chaney, Marketing and Development Manager at Sarah@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org