

Dr Johnson's House Announces Stephen Fry as New Patron



New Patron Stephen Fry poring over Johnson's 'Dictionary of the English Language' in Dr Johnson's House
Image courtesy of Kevin Percival for Dr Johnson's House Trust

Today, Stephen Fry was announced as the new Patron of Dr Johnson's House, London. Fry has long been an admirer of Samuel Johnson, the writer and wit, who lived and worked at the house in the middle of the 18th century, compiling his great *Dictionary of the English Language* there. Located in Fleet Street in the City of London, the House is open to the public as a museum.

The appointment of Fry comes at an exciting time for the museum, as Dr Johnson's House Trust is applying for a Blue Plaque to commemorate the life of another resident of the house, Johnson's servant Francis Barber. Once enslaved in Jamaica, Barber later became Samuel Johnson's servant, friend and heir. He lived at 17 Gough Square 1752–1756 with Johnson while he wrote the *Dictionary*. This is understood to be the only property still standing in the City of London that can be identified as the home of a formerly enslaved person in the 18th century.

The plaque will mark an important part of Black History in Georgian London, and will give Dr Johnson's House an exciting opportunity to explore Barber's life and experiences, framed in the context of other black lives at the time.

Stephen Fry, Patron of Dr Johnson's House, said:

'I have long admired the work, life and achievements of Samuel Johnson: the single-handed production of a comprehensive – and often hilarious – dictionary stands, among many other notable works, as a high point in our literary history. I am delighted and very honoured to become Patron of Dr Johnson's House.'

Celine Lupp McDaid, The Hyde Director of Dr Johnson's House, said:

"To have Stephen Fry join us as our Patron is an immense honour, and it is thrilling that he has joined at a moment when we're on the cusp of exciting and ambitious development plans."

Michael Bundock, author of *The Fortunes of Francis Barber and a Dr Johnson's House Trustee*, said:

"We plan to mark the fascinating life of Francis Barber with a plaque, celebrating a significant episode in British Black history. Dr Johnson's House is fascinating; Barber's story provides another good reason for visiting it."

For more information on Dr Johnson's House and Francis Barber, please contact:

Celine Lupp McDaid on

drjohnsonhouse@gmail.com / 0207 353 3745

Images of Dr Johnson's House, Stephen Fry and Francis Barber for press use available [here](#).



Further information about Dr Johnson's House:

Dr Johnson's House is a charming 300-year-old townhouse, nestled amongst a maze of courts and alleys in the historic City of London. Samuel Johnson, the writer and wit, lived and worked here in the middle of the eighteenth century, compiling his great *Dictionary of the English Language* in the Garret.

Today, the House is open to the public with a collection relating to Johnson, a research library, restored interiors and a wealth of original features. Often described by visitors as a hidden gem, 17 Gough Square is a tranquil spot in the midst of the bustling City.

Website: www.drjohnsonhouse.org

Twitter: @drjohnsonhouse

Facebook: @drjohnsonhouse

Instagram: Dr Johnson's House