



## The Bedford Society

Another year is already into its second month, so it's time to give some information about Bedford Society events for 2026. Before I do, let me encourage a reading of the articles and notices here in this newsletter, including those on our Bedford archivist and on the commissioned portrait of Elizabeth Jesser Reid and an update on Bedford Scholars. There is much going on, as always, within the Bedford Society and more broadly in RHBNC. I hope you find it interesting.

This is my last letter of introduction to the newsletter since I'm stepping down as chair of the Society in March, after serving in the role for nine years. I am so pleased to have been able to play some part in keeping alive the spirit and ethos of our college and to have been able to meet so many Bedfordians: the bond of our shared experience remains very strong. I'm really delighted to be handing over to Betty Hales (Physics, 1973) who has served on the committee for some years and has been very active in many ways within the Society. I thank Betty and all the members of the committee for their work and their support: it is a great team to be part of.

Amongst the events to look forward to we have: a talk on bookselling, in 11 Bedford Square, in late April; a guided visit, with experience guides, in Bloomsbury, in early summer ; and two autumn events now in planning.

The booking details for the event on books and bookselling, on 29th April, are here in the newsletter. Do check in early to make sure you have a place.

I hope you might manage to attend one or more of the events this year and look forward to meeting you there.

With all good wishes,

**Dr. Claire Gobbi Daunton**

History 1974

Bedford Society Chair



### **Elizabeth Jesser Reed portrait update**

The artist undertaking the commission of a portrait of Bedford College founder, Elizabeth Jesser Reid, is Robin-Lee Hall, a renowned portrait painter and former President of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. The commission became possible thanks to the generous support received from two Bedford alumnae during the 175th anniversary celebrations of Bedford College. [Read more here.](#)

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### **From Archive to Audience: Preserving the Legacy of Bedford College**

We recently spoke to Dr Alex Sessa, the new Bedford College Project Archivist, whose role has been funded by generous donations from Bedfordians during the 175th anniversary year. Alex tells us about what attracted him to the role, the work he's been doing to unlock and expand access to these remarkable collections, and his plans for the coming year. [Read more.](#)

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### **Graduating Bedford Scholars**

As postgraduate students, Bedford Society scholars typically graduate during our winter graduation ceremonies. Just before Christmas, Bedford Society Scholar Amirtha, who studied MA Victorian Literature, Art and Culture, graduated and delivered the student oration for her department. In it, she reflected on the life-changing support she received: *“My journey here was not only my first international trip, but also one I took alone. As you can imagine, the prospect of undergoing such a massive transition was both scary and exciting. I am ever so grateful to the Bedford Society for their faith in me and for making my academic dream come true.”*

You can read more about this year's Bedford Society Scholars [here](#).



### **Bedford Alumni visit to Senate House**

*by Sarah Rushton (History 1983)*

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025, a very lucky group of alumni were treated to a morning visit to 11 Bedford Square and Senate House. In Bedford Square, after a welcome coffee,

we enjoyed a short talk on the Bedford College archive, and we met the archivist Dr Alexander Sessa who will be working on the archive over the next two years. [Read more here.](#)

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### **Bedford Society WhatsApp Discussion Group**

*By Betty Hales (Physics 1973)*

The WhatsApp group now has 42 members and is thriving. We keep in touch regularly and have an informal meet-up planned for this term at 11 Bedford Square on 26th March. [Please read more about our activities and how to join the group here.](#)

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### **Memories of Bedford College**

Many Bedford alumni have submitted their Bedford stories and memories to the Newsletter. [You can read them here.](#) If you would like to submit a piece for future newsletters, please email the [Alumni Engagement Team](#).

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### **In Memoriam**

We remember the Bedford College [alumni and former staff](#) who have recently died. (Some of the notices listed here have appeared in previous issues of the Newsletter).

### **Events**

**'The Bookseller's Tale': A Conversation with Alumnus Martin Latham**  
**Wednesday 29 April, 4pm, 11 Bedford Square London**

Martin (History, 1978) will give a talk on his book, *The Bookseller's Tale*. This is part-memoir and part love letter to books and our strange tactile relationship with them. Surreptitious reading, by working folk and women, is celebrated, as is the under-recognised role of chapbooks in historical change. Booksellers, from wandering pedlars to Parisian bouquinistes, are freedom fighters. The heart of the book is the idea that we all have a childhood comfort story which resonates with our adult avocation. [Find out more and buy tickets here.](#)

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### Geography 1976 Reunion

Did you begin studying Geography at Bedford in 1976? Alumna Svetlana Opacic is exploring interest in an in-person and/or virtual gathering in September 2026 to mark 50 years since starting and would love to hear from anyone from that cohort. [Read more and express your interest here.](#)

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Read more [College news](#) and explore the calendar of upcoming [College events](#).



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