



The Bedford Society

As the new Chair of the Bedford Society, I am pleased to be introducing our May Newsletter. I will start by expressing my sincere thanks to Claire Daunton who has chaired the society so well for the past nine years, including our very successful 175th anniversary year celebrations. She certainly deserves to take things a little easier now even though she will remain fully involved as a committee member. She will be a hard act to follow. I have been a member of this group for seven years and I studied Physics at Bedford, graduating in 1973. More information about my background and that of other committee members is [available on the website](#).

The anniversary year events and fundraising have left us in a very positive position. Thanks to all our donors, large and small, we are able to fund the Project Archivist post for 2 years, in which Alex Sessa is already making a significant impact. The second amazing project which is in progress is due to the generosity of two donors. We will soon have a painted portrait of the founder of Bedford College, Elizabeth Jesser Reid. Up until now there has only been a rather severe black and white photograph of her, which doesn't fully reflect her true character. A painted portrait will much better demonstrate her passion, spirit and considerable contribution to women's education.

As a committee, we all work very hard to ensure the Society continues to review and fulfil its aims: leaving a legacy of Bedford College through our scholarships, memories archive and oral histories and to provide an opportunity for members to keep in touch through regular events and communications, including this Newsletter, our Facebook page and our WhatsApp Group. I'd like to encourage more members to contribute articles for the Newsletter so it becomes a truer reflection of the views and experiences of all alumni. Anything you have read lately or interesting theatre visits or films you would recommend. By way of example, I am planning to write an article about my recent holiday to Vietnam for the next Newsletter.

Finally, this is your Bedford Society so please let us know if you have any ideas for future events, perhaps there's something you would like to volunteer to help organise? Between us we have lots of experience and talents so let's make the most of them. I look forward to hearing from you.

With all good wishes,

Betty Hales

Physics 1973

Bedford Society Chair



EJR Letters in the Archive

Did you know, you can read the letters of Bedford College founder Elizabeth Jesser Reid online? A vast collection of her private correspondence is [available to view on the Archive web page](#). The Archive Team is still looking for volunteers to transcribe more letters from the collection. To get involved please email archives@rhul.ac.uk.

The Bookseller's Tale: A Conversation with Alumnus Martin Latham

by Maggie Bolton (History 1974)

Last month, Martin Latham spoke about his life as a bookseller and his book *The Bookseller's Tale*. He gave a most entertaining and enjoyable talk to former Bedford College students and staff. [Read more here.](#)



Bedford Scholars Update

At the end of February, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College hosted a very memorable Scholarship Reception for all scholars. Two of the Bedford scholars

(Gabriella Songui, MA Creative Writing and Qingan Huang, MSc Applied Neuroscience) attended this event and were thrilled to be invited. [Read more here.](#)

Oral History Volunteers Required

The Archive is currently seeking expressions of interest from Bedford alumni for our upcoming oral history project. Between 2016 - 2019, the university recorded 75 oral histories with Bedford alumni. Unfortunately, this project was suspended in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are pleased to announce that we are now resuming the project, and we are interested in hearing from Bedford alumni who wish to participate. Your contribution to this project will help us preserve Bedford's legacy in perpetuity. Furthermore, this is a unique opportunity for Bedfordians to share their own memories from their time at the college.

Interested participants should contact the Bedford Archivist, Dr Alex Sessa on Alexander.Sessa@rhul.ac.uk to further discuss the project.



Portrait update

Funded as part of the 175th anniversary celebrations, the commissioned portrait of Elizabeth Jesser Reid, by renowned portrait painter and former President of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, Robin-Lee Hall (pictured left), is now underway. The finished portrait will be showcased as part of a public exhibition honouring pioneering women in the Exhibition Space in the Emily Wilding Davison Building, on the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College campus, opening in January 2027.

Have you thought about the legacy you will leave behind?

As a valued member of the Bedford Society, you have a wonderful opportunity to make a lasting difference for generations to come. If you live in the UK, we are delighted to offer you the chance to write your Will **free of charge** through our trusted partner, **Octopus Legacy**. As part of this service there is the option to support Bedford Society Scholarships in your Will, should you wish to. Leave your

lasting legacy today and help ensure that the Bedford Society continues to transform lives for years to come. [Read more here.](#)



WhatsApp Group Update

by Betty Hales (Physics 1973)

We are a group of Bedford Alumni who keep in touch by WhatsApp and hold a get together, usually at 11 Bedford Square, once or twice a term. We started the group in 2020 and now have 43 members. We have arranged a day out to visit Rochester City and Cathedral on June 10th and you would be welcome to join us. [Read more here.](#)

Submit your own 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 piece for future newsletters, please email the [Alumni Engagement Team](#). We warmly welcome such contributions.

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

University of Sanctuary Symposium: Courageous Stories

Tuesday 2 June, 10am-1pm, Shilling Lecture Theatre (Egham Campus)

We would like to invite you to the University of Sanctuary Symposium: Courageous Stories, at which Dr Alex Sessa (The Bedford Archivist) and Anne-Marie Purcell will deliver a workshop utilising documents from the Archive, including those related to the role of Bedford College's refuge provision for migrants in times of crisis. Other

speakers include Mary Maker, Kehinde Ojo and Dr Naimat Zafary. [Register for the Sanctuary Symposium here.](#)

Mike Bury: An Appreciation of his Contribution to the Sociology of Health and Illness

Thursday 3 September, 11am-5pm, Senate House, London

This one-day event is being held this September to celebrate the contribution of Professor Mike Bury, who died in July 2025, to the Sociology of Health and Illness. The event will involve contributions from invited speakers who were taught by Mike on the MSc in Medical Sociology as well as talks by colleagues who have written about his contribution to the field or collaborated with him on research. We hope the event will be of interest to Bedford alumni who took the Masters in Medical Sociology. Further details of the day and how to register for this free event will be published in due course. For further information please contact [Jonathan Gabe.](#)

Bedford Society Bloomsbury Walk

Wednesday 24 June, 2pm, 11 Bedford Square London

The Bedford Society welcomes alumni to join us for a guided walk around the many buildings and places of historical interest in Bloomsbury, followed by refreshments in Bedford Square. The walk will be led by two Camden Tourist Guides, Judy Dixon and Cathy Chivers.

This event is now fully booked. Please email the [Alumni Team](#) if you would like to be added to a waitlist.

Bedford Society Scholars event - Save the Date

Thursday 8 October, 11 Bedford Square London

All alumni are invited to meet a group of recent Scholars whose post graduate studies were supported by scholarships funded by the Bedford Society and by individual Bedford alumni. Come and hear what a difference the scholarships made to them, what fascinating studies they pursued and how their careers have subsequently progressed. This will be a social occasion with opportunities to talk with the Scholars and to meet old and new friends over refreshments both before and after the talks.

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



Join over 400 alumni on the [Bedford Society Facebook group](#)

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