



The Bedford Society

I'm delighted to pass on not one but two pieces of good news.

The first is that, during the anniversary year and thanks to the generosity of Bedfordians, we have raised the funds (£96,000) to appoint to the Bedford Project Archivist post, from September. The appointment will be for two years full-time or over a longer period part-time. The person appointed will work to make the very rich resource of the Bedford College archives better known and appreciated. The archives are our story.

We hope that further funding might come in to continue to support the post into future years. If you were not able to donate during the anniversary year, but think you might be able to do so in future or may like to leave a gift in your Will, please consider [making contact with the Alumni Office](#).

The second piece of good news is that, through the generosity of Bedfordians, the college now has funding to commission a painted portrait of our founder, Elizabeth Jesser Reid. The medium will be tempera and the portrait will be based on a mid-nineteenth century photograph, the only visual record we have. A number of leading artists have expressed an interest in this commission and the final choice of artist will be made soon. We will keep you up to date as things progress.

We had a very good online [meeting in late March both to reflect on the anniversary year and to look forward](#). Thank you to all those who completed the survey and came to the meeting, with reflections and suggestions. It was very good to hear from current staff about the direction the college will take: it is aiming to be a university of social purpose, with social purpose showing through in teaching, research and pastoral care. We reflected that this provides continuity with the past since Bedford was always engaged in social purpose – that was what Mrs Reid espoused and this thread ran through Bedford into our own times.

In the immediate future we have two events to which we can look forward: [‘Close to the Throne’ at 5.00pm on 20th June at the University Women’s Club, London](#), read all about that in this newsletter. We also hope to reprise in November the very successful visit to the University of London archives and tour of Senate House that was held in November 2024.

There's much of interest here in this edition of the newsletter; do consider contributing to the next edition; please keep in touch and come along to events when you can. It's always very good to be with fellow Bedfordians.

With best wishes,

Dr. Claire Gobbi Daunton

History 1974

Bedford Society Chair



Looking Back and looking Forward, 1849-2049, Reflections on the 175th anniversary of the founding of Bedford College and an introduction to the College's new strategy RH2030s – Zoom Meeting 31st March 2025

By Maggie Bolton (History 1974)

The session started with the great news that, as a result of donations from Alumni, £96,000 has been raised to fund an archivist dedicated to the Bedford College Archives for at least two years. In addition as a result of generous donations from two Bedford Alumnae, the plan for commissioning an artist to paint the portrait of our founder Elisabeth Jesser Reid, based on the single photo we have, is also underway: a shortlist of artists has been drawn up. [Read more here.](#)



Ahead of her time

By Jennifer Glastonbury (French with German 1969)

"Someone has written a play about Elisabeth Jesser Reid (EJR), and it's on in Bracknell in mid-March!" Hearing this, we (the Bedford Society Committee) were somewhat incredulous, and I was asked to do some sleuthing. I quickly established that there was indeed a play and its author was alumna Hedda Bird, who read maths and philosophy at Bedford College from 1979 to 1982. [Read more here.](#)



Uncovering Shared Pasts

By Alison Cramer (English 1981)

We have heard much during the 175th celebratory year about the archives and in December 2024, a small group of Bedfordians plus current students were given the opportunity to understand their significance first hand. The event was very well organised and began with an introductory talk about the history of Bedford College and the archives. [Read more here.](#)

Memories of Bedford College

By Betty Hales (Physics 1973)

During the 175th Anniversary year the Bedford Society WhatsApp group took the initiative to collect reminiscences from alumni about our time at Bedford and what we had done since. We thought this would be useful for the archives and of interest to each other. Included [here are a few of those we have already collected](#) and we hope they will encourage others to send something in. A special thank you to Maya Davis, nee Herszenhorn, (Classics 1967-1970), Elizabeth Margosches, (Chemistry Placement from America, 1967-1968) and Sandra Goldstein, nee Jarrett, (German 1962-1965) who have most recently submitted their stories.

We would like to make this a regular feature of the Newsletter so please spare a few minutes to put your memories in print and share them with others before its too late. After all I doubt that many of us will still be around to celebrate the 200th Anniversary, and if we are our memories may not be too great by then! Please email alumni@rhul.ac.uk if you have memories to share.



Bedford Society WhatsApp Discussion Group

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 41 members. Many members can't get to meetings often but just enjoy contributing to the chat or reading what others have to say. Sometimes individual members arrange to meet up for a meal or other activities. [Read more here.](#)

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

Bedford Society event:

'Close to the Throne'

Friday 20 June, 5-8pm at the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square

Tickets: £35pp, including refreshments

Join us to hear from two Bedford College alumnae who have written biographies of individuals who were close to the throne.

- Lucy Hughes-Hallett (English 1973) - *The Scapegoat: The Brilliant Life of the Duke of Buckingham, the Favourite of King James I*
- Frances Dimond (English, History & Aesthetics 1968) - *Queen Alexandra: Loyalty and Love (the wife of King Edward VII)*

[Read more and book your tickets here.](#) Places are limited, so we encourage early booking to avoid disappointment.

College event:

Magna Carta Lecture - the rule of law in a changing world

Monday 9 June, 6.15pm at the College's Egham campus

Tickets: Free

Former Attorney General for England and Wales and Royal Holloway and Bedford New College alumna, The Rt Hon Victoria Prentis KC, explores why adherence to the 'rule of law' still matters when the goalposts feel like they are shifting, and how we can grasp this nebulous concept to ensure that democratic societies emerge stronger from a turbulent period.

[Read more and book tickets here.](#)

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



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Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX