

April 15 2027
Charles II and the Restoration
Dr David Smith

This presentation will examine the personality, life and reign of Charles II (1630-85). He was a remarkable and colourful monarch who, through a mixture of charisma and political skill, managed to re-establish the monarchy after the Interregnum. What personal qualities enabled this and did he have consistent principles or beliefs?



May 20 2027
AGM followed by
The Other Conquest: Changing Kings in the
Early Eleventh Century from Æthelred the
Unready to Cnut
Professor Katy Cubitt

1016 marked the accession of Cnut, the Danish king, to the English throne, a watershed moment as Æthelred the Unready's (978-1016) line had ruled England since the sixth century. Cnut had to justify winning the kingdom by force and to establish himself as the rightful Christian ruler. Tensions and resolution behind his consecration will be explored, set in the context of Æthelred's tumultuous reign beset by Viking attack and internal faction. The roles of the archbishops of Canterbury and York will also be examined.



Who are we?

The Bishop's Stortford History Society was formed in 1955 and has a growing membership of over 100. We meet on the third Thursday of each month from September to May at St Joseph's Hall, Windhill Churches Centre. All talks start at 7.30 pm promptly.

What do we do?

Membership of the Society offers you a full and interesting programme of talks and access to books and magazines of local and general interest. Additionally, trips to local places of historic interest are organised. If you have an interest in any aspect of history and would like to come to our talks, join us on our trips, or begin some research of your own, we would like to hear from you. We also try to respond to queries on local and family history.

Publications

Bishop's Stortford: A Short History
The History of Warwick Road, Bishop's Stortford
by John Rhodes
Bishop's Stortford Yesterday and Today Revisited
The Bishops' Castle: Waytemore and
Bishop's Stortford by
Mike James & Ruth Halliwell
Heritage Town Trails (available from the Bishop's
Stortford Tourist Office and South Mill Arts
Centre)

Membership

The membership rates are currently:
Annual Subscription £20.00
Visitors £5.00

To join the Society or for any other enquiries
please contact Tim Howard-Smith at:
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Please visit our website
www.bishopstortfordhistorysociety.org.uk

Charity No. 299417



Bishop's Stortford History Society



Programme of Talks September 2026 – May 2027

All meetings to be held at
St Joseph's Hall
Windhill Churches Centre
Windhill
Bishop's Stortford
CM23 2ND

Talks start at 7.30 pm

September 17 2026
The Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest of Mexico
 Ian Mursell

The momentous story of the Spanish invasion of Mexico (1519-1521) will focus on the Aztecs but include reference to the Maya. Commonly held myths about the conquest, opposing viewpoints and 'cultural resistance' will be explored, and the legacy and achievements of the Aztecs and Maya highlighted.



October 15 2026
Russia in the 1990s: Boris Yeltsin and a Troubled Transition to Democracy
 Dr Jonathan Davis

Boris Yeltsin dominated Russian politics during the 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he led Russia's transition to a market-based democracy. This was a chaotic decade, reflecting Yeltsin's character. The talk looks at his attempts to establish free-market capitalism and liberal democracy at a time of economic chaos, political instability and the war in Chechnya: the hope of a new future became a new time of troubles.



November 19 2026
The London Shipwreck: Her Final Voyage
 Jools McCusker Maxwell

The 'London', a 64-gun warship, served during the Anglo-Spanish war and later transported the future King James II of England & Ireland and James VII of Scotland during the monarchy's restoration. In 1665, the ship tragically exploded in the Thames Estuary, killing 300 people. Objects recovered from the wreck included a rare 17th-century gun carriage. All were analysed and conserved through research commissioned by Historic England.



December 17 2026
The Intriguing History of the Castle at Clavering
 Simon Coxall

Simon presents the intriguing history, hydrology and archaeology of Clavering Castle in North-West Essex which culminated in excavations conducted at the scheduled site in June 2025. Was this the 'Robert's castle' in which the Normans sheltered from the wrath of the Godwins, or was this the scene of the 'Miracle of the Ring' which was key to Edward the Confessor's sainthood? Why was it destroyed?



January 21 2027
A History of Matching Airfield
 Mark Ratcliff

An illustrated talk that details the construction of the airfield in 1943, its occupation by the 391st Bombardment Group of the 9th USAAF in 1944 and subsequently by the RAF. Some of the tragedies that the 391st Bombardment Group suffered will be discussed as well as what remains of the airfield today. A selection of artefacts will be available to examine.



February 18 2027
A Look Inside Some Churches in The Hundred Parishes
 Ken McDonald

The Hundred Parishes cover a mainly rural area spanning a hundred administrative parishes surrounding Bishop's Stortford. Examples of its many historic and attractive features not far from our town, promise surprises.



March 18 2027
Francis Barber, Dr Johnson and Bishop's Stortford Grammar School
 Michael Bundock

In the mid-eighteenth century, Bishop's Stortford Grammar School was very highly regarded. One of its most remarkable pupils was Francis Barber, once enslaved in Jamaica, who was sent to the school by the great man of letters, Samuel Johnson. How did Barber end up in Bishop's Stortford and what became of him? This talk will tell his story.



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