



Debenham History Society - Lecture Season 2025/2026

Tuesday 2nd September 2025

Suffolk's Lost Heritage - Historic Buildings which have Disappeared over Past Centuries

Stephen Poulter continues his A-Z of vanished architectural gems using surviving period prints and the reports from travellers who visited the towns and villages during the past 400 years either for personal curiosity or in the process of compiling guidebooks for the increasing number of tourists who had leisure time along with cheaper and faster methods of transport at their disposal. **This session forms the annual Knowland Memorial Lecture and entry is free.**

Tuesday 14th October 2025

Scaffolds and Stage Devils: Medieval Drama in Bury St Edmunds and Beyond

It is easy to forget that England had a very rich tradition of plays and drama before Shakespeare came on the scene. And Suffolk had one of the richest traditions of all – Suffolk playgoers wanted plays to be big, bold, explosive and spectacular! **Dr Kate Jewell's** talk will explore how plays were put on, where they could be seen, what plays were about and how far people would walk to see one. Warning - you may hear a rude song in Latin and meet a stage devil or two...

Tuesday 4th November 2025

Lady Alice De Bryene of Acton

Between October 1412 & September 1413, Lady Alice De Bryene of Acton, a Suffolk Noblewoman, maintained a record of all food & drink consumed in her significant medieval household. Incredibly, the book survived, and **Pip Wright** will talk us through the records and detail what life was like for her and her visitors.

Tuesday 2nd December 2025

Beyond Hatches, Matches and Dispatches: Curious tales from Suffolk parish registers

Many people will be familiar with the entries of baptisms, marriages and deaths in parish registers. In some cases, however, the pages of Suffolk parish registers provide intriguing insights into our ancestors' lives beyond these records. In this talk, **Sarah Doig** reveals stories of spires collapsing, community celebrations and extreme weather conditions, as well as dipping into some of the tragic and humorous circumstances in which people lived and died.

January 2026: NO MEETING

Tuesday 3rd February 2026

The Sizewell C Coin Hoard

Alex Bliss, from Cotswold Archaeology Services tells how a coin hoard comprising 321 silver coins issued between 1036 and 1044, recovered from the Sizewell C (SZC) development area, gives us great insight into the English monetary and political landscapes of the 11th century.

Tuesday 3rd March 2026

The Castle on the Hill: Royalty, Religion, Pestilence & Poverty

Barbara McElroy takes us through the history of Framlingham Castle and its impact on the town through the ages.

Tuesday 14th April 2026

Mr Soane Came to Breakfast

How did 'Mr Bury St Edmunds' James Oakes persuade renowned architect Sir John Soane to design an extension to his home in Bury's Guildhall Street in 1788? **Andrew Tindall's** illustrated talk will describe this unlikely collaboration and show the evidence of it that survives today.

Tuesday 12th May 2026

Borley Rectory: The Most Haunted House in England

Bryan Thurlow brings to life the ghostly goings on at the Essex rectory, covering the period from the 1840s to the 1940s. In 1929 a national newspaper headline declared that the rectory at Borley, near Sudbury, was the most haunted house in England. This talk features the Reverend Smith, his wife, Mabel, and professional ghost investigator, Harry Price who is called in to investigate the paranormal problems they have been experiencing at the rectory. But is this so-called expert all he professes to be?

Tuesday 2nd June 2026

A-Z of bench end figures of Suffolk Churches

Robert Halliday has a long standing interest in Suffolk churches. He has recently been engaged in a personal project to study and photograph the wooden carved figures that can be found on benches, stalls and pews in these buildings. Some are of animals, some are of people going about their daily lives, some are of saints, demons or legendary beasts, but they are all fascinating, and often very amusing. In this fully illustrated talk, he plans to share some of the discoveries he has made across the county.

Tuesday 7th July 2026

Through the Keyhole: The Homes of William Morris

Fiona Rose examines how William Morris' design philosophy influenced, and was influenced by, his homes including Woodford Hall, Red House, Kelmscott Manor and Kelmscott House. (This talk was rescheduled from February 2025).

Location: The United Reformed Church, 21 Chancery Lane Debenham Suffolk IP14 6RN
Commencing : 7.30pm (unless otherwise listed)
Cost: £5 per session (unless otherwise advertised)

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