**The club was formed on Thursday 28th January 1874 at the Chequers Hotel in the town. Just over two weeks later the first match was played with the East of England Non Conformist Grammar School (now Bishop’s Stortford College) being defeated 2-1, with goals coming from Rev. R J Tomes. In that first season 15 games were played, three of which were won, with seven others drawn. The club colours at that time were vivid crimson and olive green. After several years of playing just friendly matches the club became one of the founder members of the Hertfordshire Football Association in 1885 and played in the first ever County Senior Cup competition that same season, beating Aspley 2-1 away from home in their first match.**  
**The club progressed into league football in the 1890s by joining a succession of locally based competitions. The highlights between 1889 and 1929 were the “double” seasons in 1912-13, when both the Saffron Walden & District League and the Stansted & District League titles were secured, and 1919-20, when the East Herts League and the Stansted & District League were won.**

**The club was accepted into the FA Cup for the first time in the 1924-25 season and then it was in 1929 that the next milestone was reached when the club was accepted into Division Two (East) of the Spartan League. A good start was made with the Ministry of Health being well beaten 5-0. Three years later, at the end of the 1931-32 season, the Division Two (East) championship was won and with it promotion to Division One of the Spartan League. A year later Stortford won the Herts Senior Cup for the first time.**

**During the Second World War the club played mainly friendly matches against locally based service units. The 1945-46 season saw Stortford compete again in the Spartan League, where they stayed until the formation of the Delphian League in 1951.**

**The 1950s saw steady progress in the club’s fortunes with the Delphian League title being won in season 1954-55. Until this time progress in the FA Amateur Cup had been nothing but a dream but in season 1962-63 Stortford found themselves only two games away from Wembley.**  
**In a tense quarter-final, in front of 9,000 people, Stortford were defeated 1-0 by the Isthmian League champions Wimbledon at Plough Lane and Wimbledon went on to win the cup. The mid 1960s turned out to be a very exciting period for the club as in the space of three years, the Bishops having by now joined the expanded Athenian League, were runners-up in Division Two, champions of Division One and runners-up in the Premier Division.**

**The Premier Division title was eventually captured in the 1969-70 season. Then, a long-term ambition was realised when an application to join the Isthmian League was accepted for the 1971-72 season. The early 1970s was also another very successful period in the club’s history, third place in the League was achieved in season 1973-74, Stortford’s best ever position, whilst six cup final victories were achieved in the space of four seasons. The undoubted pinnacle of these highlights came fittingly in the club’s centenary season when the FA Amateur Cup was won at Wembley Stadium by beating Ilford 4-1 in front of over 30,000 spectators. This in fact was the last FA Amateur Cup final ever held. Scorers for Stortford were Dave Lawrence, Peter Leakey, Dennis Murphy and lastly Martin Smith from the penalty spot.**

**The rest of the decade was something of an anti-climax, with the club being relegated to Division One, but there was another huge upturn in the club’s fortunes as the 1980-81 season was another memorable one in the Bishop’s history. The club won the Isthmian League Division 1 title and the “double” came in May 1981 in the final of the FA Trophy when Terry Sullivan scored a late goal to leave lsthmian League Premier Division side Sutton United defeated 1-0 This victory came after a record breaking run of 13 games that had begun in the preliminary round in the September of the previous year. In achieving this success, Stortford became the first ever club to capture both the FA Amateur Cup and the FA Trophy.**

**After reaching the quarter final of the FA Trophy again in 1982 and setting the record for consecutive unbeaten matches in that competition (17), Blues turned their attention to the FA Cup. Though they had reached the competition proper fivee times before, it was in the 1982-83 season that they really made an impact. After disposing of local rivals Harlow Town, third division Reading were beaten at Elm Park in the first round and then Slough Town were defeated in the second round. The third round saw the Bishops drawn away at Middlesbrough, then managed by Malcolm Allison. In the tie at Teesside, Stortford fought back from a two goal half-time deficit to earn a well merited replay thanks to two Richie Bradford goals. The following Tuesday over 6,000 people packed into the Rhodes Avenue ground for the replay. Lyndon Lynch gave Stortford the lead on the stroke of half-time but Middlesbrough’s superior fitness told in the end and they fought back and eventually won through with two late goals. Stortford again faced League opposition in 1985 going out after a replay to Colchester United.**

**Towards the end of the 1980s, two former favourite players of the Rhodes Avenue crowds returned as Managers. Firstly, former England international John Radford, who had played in the FA Trophy winning side, became manager in 1987. He took the club to success in the Herts Senior Cup in his first season and continued the following season, 1988-89, by winning the AC Delco Cup (Isthmian League Cup). Apart from the cup run in, he also took the team on a promotion challenge, which only faltered in the closing weeks and the club finished seventh in the table. Terry Moore, a record holder in his days as Stortford’s goalkeeper when he collected both FA Amateur and FA Trophy cup winners’ medals – the only player to do so for the same club, then became manager and he led the Blues to victories in the Premier Inter-League (Clubcall) Cup and Isthmian League Full Members (Loctite) Cup.**

**In more recent times, the club was relegated to Division 1 at the conclusion of the 1991-92 term, but with ex-Arsenal star John Radford now as the Blues manager Stortford regained Premiership status by winning the Division One championship in season 1993-94. Life back in the Premier Division was not easy, with a best position of 12th being achieved in season 1995-96. Off the field the club suffered delays moving to its new ground at Dunmow Road having left the Rhodes Avenue ground at the end of 1997, which they had been at since 1919.**  
**After 18 months during which home league matches were played at Boreham Wood, St. Albans City, Hitchin Town, Dagenham & Redbridge and Ware, the club were once again relegated to Division One at the end of the 1998/99 season. But a new and eagerly awaited chapter in the club’s history began on Saturday 17th July 1999 when the new Woodside Park Stadium finally opened with a pre-season friendly against Norwich City. The match ended in a 2-2 draw in front of a 918 crowd.**

**On Friday 3rd September a crowd of 2,444 saw the official opening of the stadium performed by George Graham followed by a match against a strong Tottenham Hotspur side including Hans Segers, David Ginola, Chris Armstrong, Ruel Fox, Jose Dominguez, Mauricio Tarico, Steffen Freund, Stephen Clemence and Justin Edinburgh. Blues made the record books on Thursday 30th December 1999 when they won 5-3 at Chertsey in a Ryman League match, which was the last competitive match played in England in the 20th Century.**

**The club, supporters and team finally settled in at Woodside Park but only after some serious problems with the pitch had seen many postponed games and fixture headaches in those first two seasons. In the 2000/2001 campaign, Blues came with a late challenge after making wholesale squad changes at Christmas and narrowly missed out on a promotion place. However, by season 2001/2 the playing surface was immaculate and hosting Ryman and England representative games along with many local and junior league cup finals and Blues themselves were faring better in the League. Promotion back to the Ryman Premier after a three years absence was secured on the 6th April 2002 with a 2-0 home win against Walton & Hersham.**

**The 2002/3 campaign saw Blues back in the Premier Division and the near disaster of the Rhodes Avenue sale and ground sharing were fading in the memory. On Tuesday 14th January 2003, Martin Hayes team travelled to Tring in the semi-final of the Herts Charity Cup and recorded the club’s best ever win in a competitive match away from home with a 9-1 victory. Blues fortune in that cup continued as Hemel Hempstead Town were defeated 3-1 in the May final and Captain Rob French lifted Blues first silverware for six years. Back in February, the club had sold star striker Vinnie John to Hornchurch FC for a club record fee.**

**2003/04 saw the restructure of the football pyramid with Blues among the founder members of Conference South thanks to an 11th placed finish and manager Martin Hayes led them to first round proper of the FA Cup where 600 Stortford fans saw them go down 6-0 at Mansfield Town. In April, exactly 30 years to the day that Blues won the last ever Amateur Cup Final at Wembley Stadium, Stortford retained the Herts Charity Cup by defeating Cheshunt 4-1 to match that Wembley scoreline. The last game of the season saw tearful scenes as the fans said goodbye to midfield supremo, inveterate goal scorer and triple winner of the player of the season trophy, Glen Southam. His £20,000 fee to Dagenham & Redbridge set a new club record.**

**A brave new world opened for Blues in August 2004 as they kicked off their Conference South campaign with a 2-1 win at home to Eastbourne Borough. It was a journey into the unknown with league trips as far afield as Weymouth and Newport but Blues held their own in the autumn with a position on the fringe of the play offs before finishing tenth.**

**By contrast the 2005-06 season was a disappointment and yet it ended with a trophy as the Herts Senior Cup was won for the first time in 20 years with a 1-0 win over Stevenage and the season was rounded off with a record Woodside Park league crowd of 1,016 as champions elect Weymouth visited. The Blues’ leading goal scorer at this time was Steve Morison who went on to play in the Premiership for Norwich City.**

**In 2006-07 the club flirted with promotion to the National Conference, the top echelon of non-league football. A top-six league finish led to a play-off semi final against Salisbury City. The home leg, played in front of 1049 spectators ended in a 1-1 draw with Greg Pearson scoring for Stortford. Back at Salisbury, the score was again 1-1 after 90 minutes. But two extra time goals saw Salisbury march to the final and the Conference. The FA Cup first round was reached, but Blues lost 5-3 againts Kings Lynn.**

**The 2008-2009 season saw Martin Hayes record 500 games and 10 years in the job. However, a shoestring budget and poor results led to his surprise dismissal and the promotion of reserve team manager, Mark Simpson assisted by Gordon Boateng. The new management team rung the changes and Stortford rallied to move from 20th in the league table to finish 9th.**  
**Simpson remained at the helm until February 2011 during which time, in season 2009/10, Stortford again won the County Senior Cup. Simpson was replaced by ex-England and Spurs goalkeeper Ian Walker. A late three game winning run saw Walker save Blues from the drop and his side lifted the Herts Charity Cup with victory against Cheshunt. But the club where hit by a bombshell at the Conference AGM in early June when they were placed in the northern section following the demise of Rushden & Diamonds. Despite the signing of future Premier League star Dwight Gayle and on-loan Spurs keeper Jordan Archer, Blues struggled in their new surroundings and with the team in the relegation zone Walker departed early in December 2011 following a 5-0 FA Trophy at Isthmian League side Carshalton Athletic.**

**Under former Braintree boss Rod Stringer Blues had an excellent finish to the season, finishing tenth and winning both the Senior Charity Cups. The 2012/2013 season saw Blues drop to 17th as recruitment of players able to travel to the likes of Manchester and Workington on Tuesday evenings became an issue, but Stringers’s side did win their way through to the first round proper of the FA Cup before going out to Hastings United.**

**A return to Conference South saw a fine first half to the 2013/2014 campaign contending for a “play-off” place and reaching the 1st Round of the FA Cup once again. They were handed a tie at home to Northampton Town that was televised live on ITV and attracted a record crowd of 2,548. Form orm dipped in the New Year however when faced with playing 22 games in final 50 days of the season and they finished below halfway in the League table. A small consolation was that the Herts Charity Cup was won once again.**

**The 2014/2015 campaign was not a great one for the Blues but after some inconsistent form up until the last few months of the season they improved to steer clear of the relegation zone to ensure another year as a member of the Vanarama National South.**

**Stringer resigned after four and a half seasons at the end of the 2015/16 campaign to take charge of Chelmsford City. That season saw the Blues again finish around midway in the League table and win the Herts Charity Cup. Striker Elliott Buchanan was the top goalscorer in the league and won the Vanarama Conference “Golden Boot” award.**

**The 2016/17 season was a disaster for the club and probably the worst in the history finishing in the second-from-bottom place to be relegated to the Evo Stik Southern League after 13 seasons in the Conference set-up. Stortford had two management teams running affairs before ex Spurs, Swindon, Rotherham United, Reading and Colchester United midfielder Kevin Watson was appointed manager late in the season. Stortford did reach the Senior Cup final but lost 2-1 to Hitchin Town.**

**A first season in the Southern League saw Watson’s young side finish 18th in the 24 team league. A switch back to the Isthmian League saw former Witham Town boss Adam Flint step into the manager’s shoes but he failed to win a game and was replaced in mid-September by club owner Steve Smith and former Norwich City striker Jamie Cureton. The pair took the club to seventh th place in the table, just missing out on the play-offs as well as reaching the league cup semi-final.**

**Cureton celebrated the achievement of playing 1000 competitive games in the 3-2 win against Brightlingsea Regent, netting twice on the way to finishing as leading scorer in the Isthmian Premier, and he remains joint boss with Smith as The Blues head into the 2019/20 season.**