

NEWSLETTER

BALDOCK MUSEUM AND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Museum News

Since the end of July the attendance at the Museum has been very poor. Only 64 people have visited in 5 months, a little over half of the previous lowest period in 2001. We presume that this is something to do with the works on the Town Centre but it is very frustrating and disappointing for those taking their turn in the Museum. So if you have not been to see the current displays please go and see them and encourage others to do the same.

The current display is about the Bondor factory in Baldock explaining the reasons for building it and the various problems up to the arrival of FULFA in 1928 and its subsequent history as Kayser Bondor.

We have assembled an interesting collection of objects and the display being only about Baldock is almost entirely different to both the Kayser Bondor book and to our previous display on the factory and uses (mostly) different photographs.

We also have a new display on the landing called "The Pryors in Baldock" which explains the involvement of that family in brewing, malting and farming in Baldock in the 18th and 19th centuries. It also shows all their own residences and other property in the town and their contribution to the life of the town.

Coming Events

Thursday 22nd Jan	"The Archaeology of the Baldock Brewery Site" (Discoveries made prior to the building of Aldridge Court) <i>This talk was due last November but was postponed to this date</i>	David Hillelson (Heritage Network)
Thursday 26th Mar	"Slides of Old Baldock" (A selection from the collection of Frank Newman)	Brendan King
Thursday 28th May	"Thoughts on Ancient Baldock" (NHDC's Archaeology Officer returns to give us some further reflections on the Iron Age and Roman town)	Keith Fitzpatrick Matthews
Thursday 23rd Jul	"Memories of Kayser Bondor"	Neville Chuck
Thursday 24th Sep	AGM and Quiz Evening with food and drink.	
Thursday 26th Nov	"Rambles around the History of Wallington"	Dan Pinnock

All meetings at Baldock Community Centre at 8 pm, non-members £1.00

Did You Know ...

..... that from the early 17th century (or before) until the mid 19th century the present Park Street was called Pepper Alley? The present Pepper Alley appears to have had no commonly used name except that in the early 17th century it was called Knight Lane. This name derived from Richard Knight who once owned the row of cottages at the end of the lane in Pepper Alley called Knights Row.

The name Pepper is very unlikely to have any connection with the selling of that spice or with a person of that name or, still less, with the suggestion that it was the location of the "piepowder" court set up to adjudicate during the town's fairs. Most probably it was considered to be a rough part of town or a place where people went to settle their differences because in the 16th century one meaning of to pepper was to beat severely, to trounce, and at some stage "Pepper Alley" (referring to a lane in London) was used in pugilistic slang.

The Town Centre Works

The recent works on the town centre have certainly provoked much comment in the last few weeks, mostly in the form of complaints. Now that it is beginning to take shape the complaints seem to be lessening and a few more positive views are to be heard. The end result is always going to be a matter of opinion. The new “greens” look quite attractive and enhance the buildings behind them; the new lamp posts however do not, especially in White Horse Street. The York stone paving looks very smart but the granite paving is more Stevenage new town than old Baldock. More generally the town looks more spacious but in places there is a mechanical regularity about which is at odds with the natural higgledy-piggledyness of an old town. The mania for regularity and levelling has led to a general rise in the level of streets and pavements, which might cause problems for some properties when there is a serious downpour.

One of the more frequently heard complaints is that we have “lost” our wide streets. That depends on what is meant by “street”. Certainly we have lost our wide carriageways designed to take the A1 through the town (whether that is a good or a bad thing in terms of traffic flow and the peace of the town remains to be seen) but the street width is still the same. Another frequent question is: what will happen to the grass when the Fair comes in? The answer to that is simple enough. Given the usual Baldock Fair weather the ground will be chewed up and the Council will have to repair it at our cost. There were plenty of warnings made about this during the consultation process and because the Fair cannot lawfully be obstructed, impeded or stopped from coming and because notwithstanding this the

Council have taken away the hard-standing and replaced it with grass, they have no grounds for exacting any payment for damage from the Fair.

Representatives of this Society attended the various consultation meetings in advance of the project. We wrote to the consultants in March 2007 expressing the views, based on listening to many comments, that there seemed to be no great demand for radical changes to the town centre and that it just needed a bit of tidying up with eyesores removed where possible. We also questioned the means of gauging public opinion during the consultations which were likely to encourage eye-catching ideas rather than conservative ones and we asked for the views given in the previous “Visioning” meetings to be taken into account and for an informal canvass of opinion in the shops and on the streets of the town in order to get a better idea of public opinion.

Whether, in view of all this, the Council are justified or not in claiming majority support for the scheme the fact is that in the end someone has to make a decision and it is only right that it should be our elected councillors who make it. The result is, in general, an improvement and, once we get used to the change, no doubt most will accept it as such. There are still some outstanding problems, such as the lawful rights long exercised over the forecourts of Quenbys and Stutleys which the Council apparently believes it can remove at a whim and the availability of parking for shoppers; if these are left unresolved there could be more losses of shops to the town. Let us hope that the “enhancement” has the desired effect of reviving the town centre and in that at least we can all play our part.

Don't Forget

Subscriptions are now due and are still only £5 family and £3 single.

<p><u>Museum Opening Times</u></p> <p>Sunday 2 pm to 4 pm Wednesday 11 am to 1.30 pm</p>	<p><u>Committee Officers</u></p> <p>Chairman: Brendan King Secretary: Stephen Childerstone Treasurer: John Merrett</p>
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