

NEWSLETTER

BALDOCK MUSEUM AND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Museum

We have a new display in the Museum called "Redcoat". It is about life in the British Army, mainly in the 18th and 19th century, and particularly looks at the service of Baldock men. The display was written and mounted by Janet Waters a former member of our committee who has given talks and a previous display on women in the 19th century Baldock. We are grateful to Janet and her husband, Brian, and other members of her family for contributing to this display. Our thanks also to Pat Thornton for his display on SERL which preceded

Janet's and was very popular.

The new film about Kayser Bondor proved very successful at its premiere in May; 98 people came to see a short history of the firm in its heyday and local people recalling their time there. Most of the members stayed to watch a second run later in the evening. We are having a few DVDs made of the film which will be on sale in the Museum at £5 each. If you would like to have a copy (and have not already done so) please telephone 892640 to receive one ASAP.

Coming Events

Thursday 28th July "Baldock Houses: How to turn Detective on yours" - by Jane Havercroft
Tips on finding out the history of your house or of the land on which it stands.

Thursday 29th September AGM, Quiz and Buffet Evening.

The AGM lasts about 35 mins and is a summary of our activities during the last year, do not worry that you might be asked to do something! After that it is purely a social occasion. There will be an admission charge to cover the costs of the buffet of £2.

Thursday 24th November "Prehistoric Norton" by Keith Fitzpatrick Matthews

More surprising discoveries made during recent excavations by our popular local archaeologist.

All meetings at Baldock Community Centre at 8 pm.

Non-members always welcome at £1.00 admission so please bring a friend

Museum Opening Times

Sunday 2 pm to 4 pm
Wednesday 11 am to 1.30 pm

Committee Officers

Chairman: Brendan King	892640
Secretary: Stephen Childerstone	893900
Treasurer: John Merrett	893738

New Additions to the Collection

The closing of the Baldock offices of Balderston Warren has provided an unexpected windfall, if rather a heavy one, for the Museum. Many years ago, after a local teacher discovered a pile of historically important old deeds in a Biggleswade junk shop which had apparently been dumped by a respected old Hitchin firm, we asked the partners of Balderston Warren not to throw out any old documents but to let us see them first and find them a safe home if necessary. In fact the firm had already passed over to us a considerable number of valuable deeds and the manor court books of Baldock but, with changes of staff and the nature of the practise, we felt it would be as well to make a formal request. What we had not expected was that the Baldock office would close and we would be deluged with papers!

Only a fairly small proportion of these documents relates to Baldock because the Baldock office once dealt with farmers and others over a wide area and there are large bundles relating to nearby parts of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, as well as some strays from Norfolk and Middlesex. However there is plenty of interest for Baldock including useful further information on the Wilderness (late 19th/early 20th c), Clothall End (19th/20th c), the Manor of Baldock (18th c), Clarke's Yard (19th/20th c) along with various sale particulars, posters and other property deeds.

Hot on the heels of that donation came another from Langford Local History Society consisting of hundreds of photographic prints of Baldock. A

quick inspection gives the impression that most of them are pictures used in "Baldock Voices" and "A Baldock Scrapbook" and further investigation has revealed that they came from a gentleman who once worked in the photographic department of Russells chemists in Whitehorse Street. Presumably he kept copies of interesting prints that he made for customers. The value of this collection is that it provides good quality copies in a standard size of a wide variety of different prints, slides and postcards in various collections. It will take a long time to catalogue this collection because of the large number of duplicates that need to be sorted out.

There is no doubt that the existence of the Museum has encouraged many donations and therefore the survival of documents and objects that might otherwise have been lost or thrown away. There is a tendency these days, especially amongst councils, to think of museums as a form of leisure facility whose usefulness is measured in numbers of visitors. A museum ought to be much more than that, it should be an educational facility and a repository of our historic culture. Certainly museums may try to be entertaining or interesting at the same time as being informative, but they must also collect items that are of historic interest even though they are often of little or no interest to the general public. One only has to read a modern archaeological report to see the inferences that can be drawn from hundreds of dull-looking scraps of pottery, bones etc, and the same applies to documents.

Eileen Crellin

No doubt most members will have seen the obituary of Eileen Crellin, who died in February, in the April issue of the Baldock Mail. Our longer serving members will recall that Eileen was one of the founder members of this society and was its chairman for the first couple of years or so and, for some years afterwards, Eileen and Vivian were very welcoming hosts of some of our committee meetings at their home, the old Eight Bells in Church Street. Eileen was always so encouraging and supportive of her successors and was particularly adept at restoring morale when prospects seemed gloomy. She was a kind and gentle lady who never ceased to be interested in this town and its people, may she rest in peace.