

JULY 2014

NEWSLETTER

BALDOCK MUSEUM AND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

VENUE FOR COMING TALKS

The downstairs room of the Town Hall has generally proved a very pleasant venue for our talks which have been well attended so far this year. The main difficulty has been that at times we have been almost at capacity and, for the January talk we were not far off having to turn people away. A further problem has arisen since the room began to be used as a coffee shop and we have had to move several quite heavy tables out of the way and then back again, and bring chairs from upstairs.

Things would be easier if we used the hall upstairs, which also has the advantage of a kitchen, but we are very conscious of the difficulty some of our members find in getting up the stairs. For this reason, and because the hall is rather too big for some of our talks, we will try to continue using the downstairs room where possible but sometimes we will have to use the hall. Our next talk is one such case: Jane's talks are always well attended and there is a risk that we may go beyond the capacity of the downstairs room and furthermore we cannot be sure that anyone will be available to move the furniture on that occasion. We apologise to those of our members who cannot get up the stairs for this talk and can only say that the installation of a lift is a priority for the Town Hall once funding can be obtained. We will revert to the downstairs room for the AGM and for Frank Foy's talk and will review the situation in time for the January newsletter, so anyone with any comments to make should come to the AGM or otherwise make their views known. We recommend that you arrive a little earlier than usual (about ten minutes or so before the start) to make sure of a seat for Frank's talk.

So the remaining meetings this year are as follows:

Thursday 24th July: 'Baldock Houses; Even more tales of the unexpected', Jane Havercroft continues her popular series of the stories behind some of the town's houses. **N.B. this talk will be in the upstairs hall of the Town Hall.**

Thursday 25th September: **AGM, Quiz and Buffet Evening.** A short revue of the Society's doings during the year and our plans for the future, followed by a pleasant social evening. There will a charge of £2 for those staying for the buffet.

Thursday 27th November: 'Baldock in 1914', Frank Foy explains what Baldock was like on the eve and early months of the First World War using the local newspapers.

All these meetings begin at 8pm in the Town Hall. Non-members are welcome, admission £2.

“Oh, it’s nice to get up in the morning in a beautiful place like this.” So said The town centre, particularly the High Street, seems to be looking at its best recently. Most of the principal eyesores have been improved, the shops are occupied, the market is showing signs of life and the place has a prosperous air about it. The improvements to the lower part of the exterior of the Town Hall have helped and the recent restoration of the George and the Grange/Goldcrest has also made a great difference. These buildings were, not so long ago in a dreadful state and had been a blot on the town for some years. The tasteful new shop fronts on Chapman’s and The Print Shop have been another great improvement and the new London Row gallery in Chapman’s old shop has brightened up that end of Church Street.

We should not forget that the present situation is the result of a gradual process over many years. For instance an important improvement to the townscape was the restoration of Pepper Court a few years ago. This house, which dates from c.1795 and which must have been a handsome brick building, looked quite ugly with its unsymmetrical 19th century extension on the right hand side, its added porch and rendered facade but the installation of the proper, Georgian-style, sash windows made a remarkable difference to its appearance. Before that there was a major restoration on the almshouses and in more recent times on the Manor House and Holford House. Although there have been many other improvements to town centre properties in recent years it is the work done to the large Georgian buildings that catches the eye and makes the most difference because so much of Baldock’s charm depends on them.

The town centre has probably never looked quite so smart in all its history. If only the Council would be more careful of the Conservation Area by preventing any more unsympathetic development and unsuitable shop signs, not to mention unsightly street furniture; while we are on that subject how on earth was permission ever given for the hideous porch on the Zeus/Templars which is supposed to be a listed building?