



July 2019

NEWSLETTER

Baldock Museum & Local History Society

COMING EVENTS

Thursday 25th July, **“Baldock Radio Station,”** *the history of the radio station on the Royston Road and its purpose from the 1920s to the present* by David Thorpe.

Thursday 26th September, **AGM and slide show of Old Baldock.** *Last year we tried having a short AGM followed by a slide show of old Baldock pictures instead of the usual quiz and buffet; as this proved more popular we are going to try it again (with different pictures of course!)*

Thursday 28th November, **“Baldock's Oldest Photographs,”** *taking a detailed look at the earliest pictures of the town* by Jane Havercroft.

All meetings begin at 8pm in Baldock Community Centre. Non-members are welcome, admission £2.

Please note that the new Museum display is *Baldock in 1919, the town in the aftermath of the Great War* which has been kindly prepared by Frank Foy, do go and see it and the new works in the old Town Hall.

HISTORY IN THE AFTERNOON - COMING TALKS: This series of afternoon talks has restarted with the reopening of BAHC. BMLHS members are entitled to a £1 discount so they pay £3 for each talk with free tea & home-made cake! **Talks begin at 2.30 pm**
NB: the talk on July 12th has been postponed due to a clash of bookings.

August 9th, **“Baldock Houses: more tales of the unexpected”** by Jane Havercroft (you are advised to arrive at least ten minutes early as this is a popular talk).

September 13th, **“Goodman's Lords and Ladies; unusual English folk customs”** (with songs) by Barry and Jill Goodman.

October 11th **“The Borough of Baldock in the Middle Ages,”** local government in the 13th century by Brendan King.

November 8th: tbc.

BALDOCK ARTS & HERITAGE CENTRE

By now most of you will have had the opportunity to visit the old Town Hall, or 'Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre' (BAHC) as we must now remember to call it, and will have seen the wonderful changes that have been made. The main entrance has been overhauled, the large windows in the Thomas Pryor Theatre have been replaced, the toilets have been modernised and altered to allow disabled access and the Gallery has been transformed by a very stylish new coffee bar. A new door and stairs linking the Gallery and the old Fire Station have brought the Museum and Gallery/Theatre sides together and thereby opened the way for the next stage of the re-development of the building viz: the creation of a new main entrance where the old Fire Station doors were and a new Museum display area to reflect the style of the rest of the rest of the building.

However this for the future, the recent works have taken a little under two years from planning to finishing and the next stage, though not as ambitious, may well take as much time - once it gets started and there is much to think about before that happens. In the meantime we have moved our display boards into the old Fire Station for the current display ' **Baldock in 1919**' and have closed the tower room. This has enabled the Museum to be accessible from the Gallery during the times that is open (usually Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10am-2pm). The plan is that, once we have discovered what the most popular and convenient times are (including the present Sunday opening, 2pm-4pm), we will select the best opening times accordingly and open both Gallery and Museum as one. Once this happens, perhaps in the Autumn, we can use the main door as the entrance, because it is more inviting and visible to visitors, and those attending the Museum/Gallery will be able to sit in the Gallery which will be much more comfortable and pleasant (and warm). Volunteers would do a two hour shift as before.

All this depends upon the continued support of the Museum volunteers and we hope you will continue to support us as you and so many others have done over the 20 years (last December) since we first opened. **However, as was mentioned in the last Newsletter, we really need some more help with this as we have lost quite a few volunteers in recent years, so please, if you can do two hours a month, or even every two or three months, do telephone 892640 or speak to us at a talk.**

IN MEMORIAM

Sadly since our last newsletter three of our members have died. **Nora Penfold**, who did so much for this town and her beloved Church of St. Mary's, will be for ever associated in our minds with her great friend Edna Page. To these two may largely be attributed the sparking off of a wider interest in the history of Baldock, which has continued over the last thirty years, after they set about recording the memories of the older residents which was published in 1991 as '*Baldock Voices*.' In 1992, as far as we understand it, as members of the Baldock Society committee, they took on the task of setting up a local history society as a sort of offshoot of the Baldock Society with the object of having a museum for the town. They remained as committee members until 2004 having seen the Museum established, but continued to support the Society until they could no longer do so.

Another former committee member who has recently died was **Gordon Collinson**. Gordon was a former wartime RAF, then Fleet Air Arm, pilot on Catalinas and Seafires and was a prominent member of the local RAFA branch. He worked at the British Tabulating Machine Company and ran their museum, then joined our Committee and served from 1995-2014 using his experience to help set up our Museum.

The third person was **Noel Sheldrick** who died in April. Noel has been a member of this Society for many years and was a regular attender at the talks. We are sure all our members would wish to join in sending our condolences to their families and friends. May they rest in Peace.

THE WRONG TROUSERS

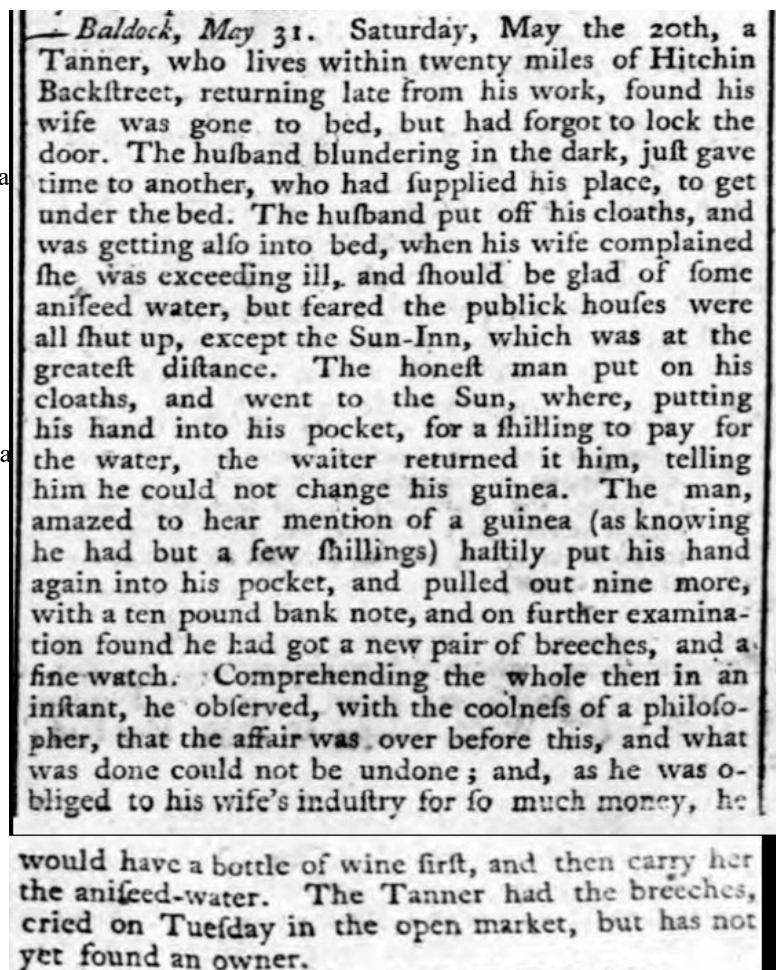
We have had occasion before to bring to your attention newspaper articles that shine a light on odd corners of Baldock history, but quite often, when trawling through old newspapers, the real treasures are to be found in the quirky, eccentric and odd facets of human life that they often reveal. Sometimes these oddities were copied from one paper to another around the Kingdom and might be found in places far from their origin.

One such local case found its way into the Chester Chronicle edition of June 5th 1775, sufficiently far from Hertfordshire to excuse the confused local geography. The implication seems to be that the incident took place in Baldock but some of the details suggest it may have been Hitchin that was meant. The "*Sun-Inn*" referred to may be the large inn in Hitchin but it could also mean the public house known as the *Sun* that preceded the *Victoria* in Baldock. There were no tanners listed in the trade directory for Baldock in 1790 and, although there were tanners in medieval Baldock, the trade has been associated with Hitchin in modern times. Market day in Hitchin was on a Tuesday, Baldock's was on Thursdays, but we cannot necessarily depend on the accurate reporting of these details, nor does it really matter because it is the story that counts.

One of the delights of these old newspapers is in the manner the story was told because the comic situation was greatly enhanced by the droll facetiousness of the reporting, which was very much the style of the period and for long after: Dickens uses the same style in his "*Sketches by Boz*" some sixty years later.

For those not used to this old print the long s - (ſ) is used within words and looks very like an f, but not quite the same being without the small bar. To confuse things further, the short s is used at the end of words. A guinea (21 shillings) might have been about a week's wages for the tanner if he was an employed man - no wonder he was inclined to be philosophical!

(With thanks to Frank Foy and his friends for finding and sending in this news item)



Baldock, May 31. Saturday, May the 20th, a Tanner, who lives within twenty miles of Hitchin Backstreet, returning late from his work, found his wife was gone to bed, but had forgot to lock the door. The husband blundering in the dark, just gave time to another, who had supplied his place, to get under the bed. The husband put off his cloaths, and was getting also into bed, when his wife complained she was exceeding ill, and should be glad of some aniseed water, but feared the publick houses were all shut up, except the Sun-Inn, which was at the greatest distance. The honest man put on his cloaths, and went to the Sun, where, putting his hand into his pocket, for a shilling to pay for the water, the waiter returned it him, telling him he could not change his guinea. The man, amazed to hear mention of a guinea (as knowing he had but a few shillings) hastily put his hand again into his pocket, and pulled out nine more, with a ten pound bank note, and on further examination found he had got a new pair of breeches, and a fine watch. Comprehending the whole then in an instant, he observed, with the coolness of a philosopher, that the affair was over before this, and what was done could not be undone; and, as he was obliged to his wife's industry for so much money, he would have a bottle of wine first, and then carry her the aniseed-water. The Tanner had the breeches, cried on Tuesday in the open market, but has not yet found an owner.