**Welcome To Baldock**

Baldock is a small market town nestled below the Chiltern Hills on the crossroads of the ancient Icknield Way and the Great North Road 37 miles north of London. The town is one of five Hertfordshire towns classed as being of national importance for its historic character, and the town centre contains over 100 listed buildings. The medieval street plan survives with its remarkable finds. There have been extensive excavations of the site and many interesting villages to visit. Just to the north of the town is Ivel Springs, a nature reserve part of which was once 12 acres of watercress beds. The Springs mark the beginning of the Kingfisher Way, a nature trail along the Ivel. On the southern edge of the town to the benefit of its coaching inns and other traders. This led to more road traffic through the town to the benefit of its coaching inns and other traders. This, along with malting and a substantial brewing industry, brought renewed prosperity to the town which had still not recovered in 1548 when it was described as “a market town much decayed”. Nevertheless during this period Baldock was able to support a well-endowed guild founded in 1465 “The Brotherhood of the Name of Jesus”.

By 1720s also saw the creation of local Turnpikes (toll roads) which made significant improvements to the roads enabling bulk produce like malt to be moved more easily. This led to more road traffic through the town, which was described in 1779 as “a very considerable place being large and well inhabited.”

The medieval trade received a great impetus during the 1720s with the increasing demand from the London breweries for the slightly scorched brown malt, a Hertfordshire speciality, that was required to make the newly popular drink of porter. The Black Death of 1348 and succeeding visitations of the plague greatly reduced the population and prosperity of the town which had still not recovered in 1548 when it was described as a “market town much decayed.” Nevertheless during this period Baldock was able to support a well-endowed guild founded in 1465 “The Brotherhood of the Name of Jesus”.

By Rail - Baldock is easily accessible from Junction 9 of the A1(M), the A505 and A507 both run through the town.

By Road - Baldock is 50 minutes from London Kings Cross and 30 minutes from Cambridge.

**Town Of The Knights Templar**

Baldock was founded in the late 1140’s by the Knights Templar, a religious order dedicated to fighting the Saracens in the Holy Land, the profits from the town being used to help finance the war. The new town made rapid progress and by the early 14th century had become prosperous with a sizeable and flourishing population. Nevertheless during this period Baldock was able to support a well-endowed guild founded in 1465 “The Brotherhood of the Name of Jesus”.

**Georgian Prosperity**

Baldock slowly recovered through the 17th century in part because of its growing involvement in the malt trade. This recovery received a great impetus during the 1720s with the increasing demand from the London breweries for the slightly scorched brown malt, a Hertfordshire speciality, that was required to make the newly popular drink of porter. The open commons to the east of the town were renowned for the quality of their barley and the skill of the town’s maltsters was such that by 1792 Baldock was “noted for making most excellent malt, and the quantity made being exceeded but by one town in the Kingdom.”

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Historic Baldock
Below is a selection of some of the interesting buildings to be seen in Baldock

1. THE WILDERNESS (43 - 53 HITCHIN STREET) - Built in 1371, probably for the maletser Robert Pryor. By the late 18th century the Pryor family dominated the malting and brewery trade of Baldock.

2. MALTINGS - There are still a few relics of the malting trade. 19th century maltings, from c 1790-1815 was the site of James Ind’s malthouse and brewery. The Inds lived in the adjoining house Nos 40 & 42 Whitehorse Street. The former Mowerley Maltings has a 16th century kilnhouse behind the 19th century frontage and 18th century kilnhouses up the yard. More 18th century maltings may be seen at the High Street end of Mansfield Road, once the Lion Maltings. Look out for the distinctive vents on the roofs of the old kiln houses.

3. BUTTERFIELD HOUSE (4 HITCHIN STREET) - Built in 1871 to replace the old rectory which stood behind the present building. It was designed by William Butterfield one of the foremost architects of the Victorian Gothic revival style.

4. ST MARY’S CHURCH - Described as the second largest parish church in Hertfordshire, it is a reflection of the wealth of Baldock during the Middle Ages. St Mary’s was almost totally rebuilt during the 14th century and much improved in the 15th, only part of the chancel remains from the old church of the Templars. There are three fine medieval screens stretching across the church, the south chapel being particularly elaborate.

5. 1 CHURCH STREET - The ancient house beside the churchyard dates from the 15th or 16th century and was once the residence of some of the rectors of St Mary’s in early Tudor times. Notice the small medieval windows on the churchyard side of the house.

6. QUAKER MEETING HOUSE - Acquired in 1696 it was mostly rebuilt c 1750, the last meeting was held in 1809 and it was sold in 1950. The first Baldock Quakers were founded by George Fox the founder of the Society of Friends in 1655. During the reign of Charles II they suffered persecution yet they increased in number. By the 18th century some of the town’s wealthiest brewers and malters were Quakers.

7. COACHING INNS - The three principal inns during the coaching age were the Rose and Crown which dates from the 17th century, the George, now the George and Dragon which was first mentioned in 1465 and was rebuilt c 1790 and the White Horse dating from 1614 by far the largest, only a remnant of its west wings remains (part of 15 White Horse Street).

8. RABAN COURT - These 16th Century buildings were once an inn called the Talbot. The Talbot was a hunting dog and the open fields to the east of the town were famed for hunting and coursing. The dog also featured on the arms of the Baggyynes, 16th century Lords of Clothall Manor in which this area of Baldock once stood. In the 18th century these buildings became part of a large complex of maltings.

9. THE MANOR HOUSE (21 HIGH ST) - Built during the 1730s the house was purchased in 1769 by Mrs Mary Grave, mistress of the 6th Earl of Salisbury, “the Wicked Earl”. He had abandoned his wife and family at Hatfield House and lived as a recluse with Mary at his mansion house at Quickwood near Baldock to the great scandal of Society. On his death in 1780 Mary came to live here until her death in 1789.

10. BREWERIES - Little remains of Baldock’s breweries: the front of the Community Centre was an old malthouse and later an engine house of the town’s largest brewery which from c 1730 was developed by the Thuggood and then the Pryors who built a new brewhouse now the site of the library, and the Brewery House (now Clare House, 23 High St) c 1780. In 1833 the brewery and its 122 tied pubs were sold to the Simpson brothers, the brewery closed in 1965.

11. THE GATES - The ancient gates at 24 High Street, erected in 1621 under the terms of the Will of John Wynne, a London mercer from a local family, for the maintenance of six poor old folk. They are the oldest brick built houses in Baldock.

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13. TESCO - This building, or at least the facade, was built c 1920 for a photographic processing company but was taken over by the Full Fashioned Hosiery Company as a stocking factory which later became Kayser Bondot. It stands on the site of a mansion called Elmwood Manor which once stood in fifty acres of parkland, the lodge of the house still remains.

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