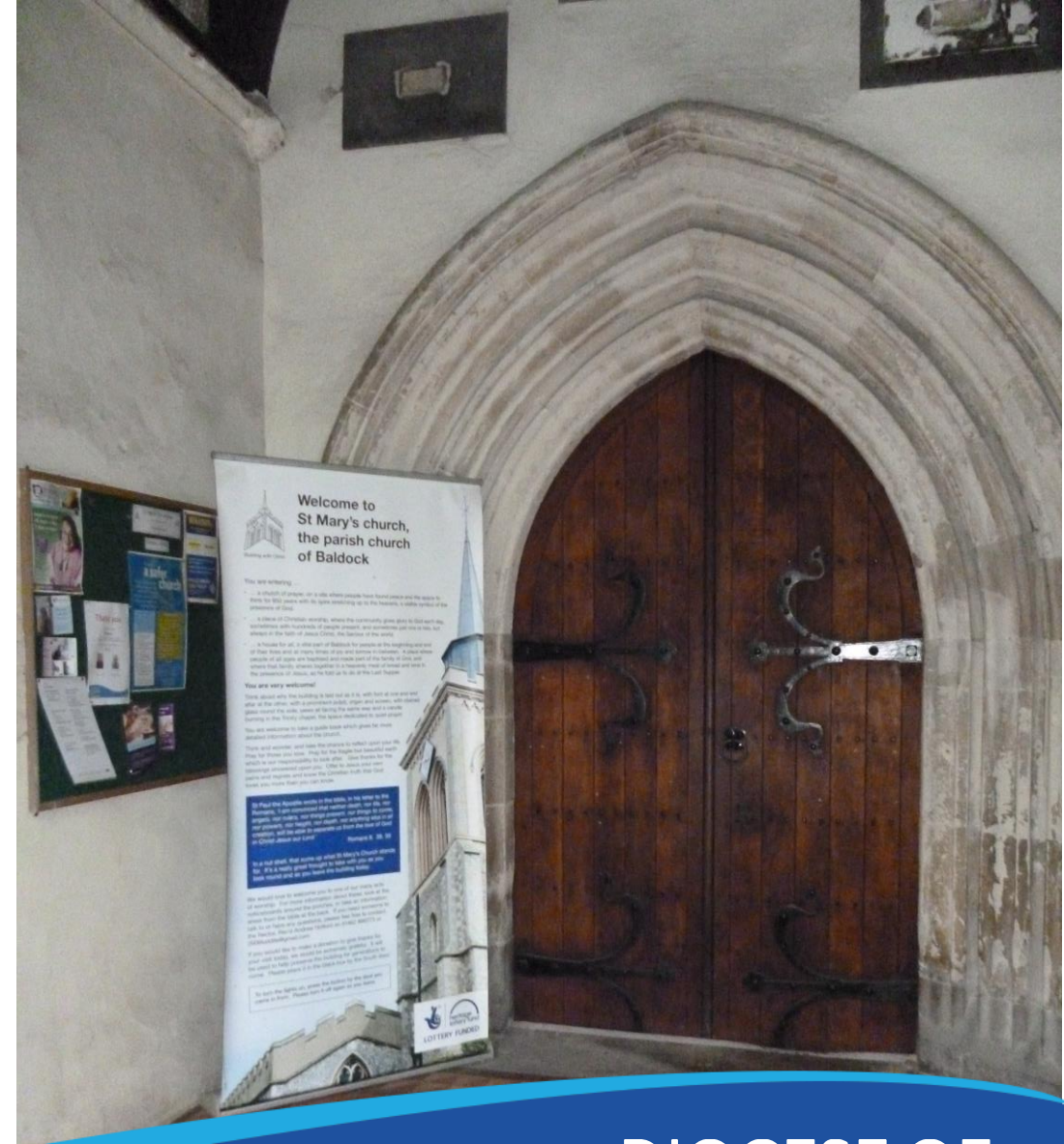


Opening your Church

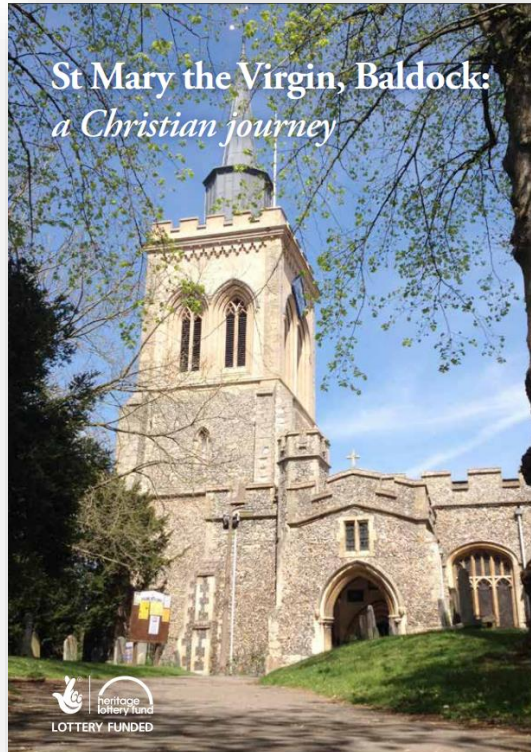
St Mary the Virgin, Baldock

Welcoming

- Porch light visible from the road
- Notice on the door
- Light switch by the door
- Website
- Facebook page
- Resources
- Information boards and guidebook



Guidebook



A suggested route around the church

St Mary the Virgin
Baldock
Building with Christ

13th Century
14th Century
15th Century
19th Century
Guided route

Position of NORTH CHAPEL
Now Vestry and Organ

HIGH ALTAR and CHANCEL

CHOIR

SOUTH CHAPEL
Finch

NORTH AISLE

NAVE

SOUTH AISLE

NORTH PORCH

SOUTH PORCH

TOWER

Start

North

At the heart of the town for 900 years, a view of Baldock from the Church tower.

The Outset

This area has been of spiritual importance since ancient times. There is evidence of a Bronze-Age settlement where the Icknield Way passed the Ivel Springs and there was an important Roman town around what is now Clothall Road. However the blueprint for the town we recognise as Baldock today began about the time of the Second Crusade in 1147 when the Earl of Pembroke gave "ten librates of land" from his Weston Manor and the rights to the income of markets and fairs to The Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon.

This was an Order of the Church to which Pope Innocent 2nd had issued special privileges because they protected Christians on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Members of this Order are usually called Knights Templar. By 1185 the "ten librates of land" was a thriving town and amongst its rent paying inhabitants were one Parson, five Chaplains, one Deacon, one Brother of the Templars and four masons. This suggests that Baldock had a substantial stone place of worship.

The privileges bestowed upon the Knights Templar enabled them to control vast assets but also to incur considerable resentment and in the 1309 the Order was disbanded and its possessions, in this country, were seized by King Edward 2nd. In 1312 when the King's men came to take the market and fair tolls, the townspeople of Baldock including Thomas Cateyl assaulted, robbed and killed three of them. Later that year it was judged that former Templar assets should be appropriated to pious use and so most of the Templar property

The Pathway

It is appropriate to begin our tour of the church at the font.

The font is used for baptism and is the start of the Christian journey through life. The word is derived from the Latin *fontis* meaning 'a spring of water' and reminds us that St John the Baptist baptised Jesus in the River Jordan. Water is a sign of cleansing and beginning a new life in the church family.

This font is transitional Norman in design and has probably been in use here since the twelfth century. Many Medieval fonts were octagonal in shape. Often seven of the sides depicted one of the sacraments whilst the eighth side was often carved with an image of the Last Judgment, Mary and child, the Trinity, Christ's baptism, crucifixion or His resurrection. From 1236 all fonts had to have a securely locked cover.

We do not know if this font was ever decorated with sacramental images but the damage and marks on the surfaces of the stone sides could have been inflicted during the Reformation or Civil War when many Medieval effigies were destroyed. Unfortunately there is no record of what happened to this font's cover.

The black and white tiles on the floor of the baptistery and the steps leading up to the font date from 1901. The window in the tower, now clear, is to the memory of Vickris Pryor who died 1849. Described as "the worst window in the church: it once had images representing Abraham, David and Moses.

This font has been used to baptise the people of Baldock for centuries and is still used frequently.

The Medieval chest, in the corner, was an 'Arca Domini' ('chest of the Lord') and used to collect "St Peter's Pence", the tax of one penny per household payable to the Pope at 'Lamma's'. This was an Anglo Saxon festival meaning "loaf mass" when a loaf would be baked using the wheat from the first harvest on the first day of August, a date which also commemorates the time St Peter broke out of prison. These boxes became known as Peter's Pence chests or Bread chests and, after the Reformation, were used to collect alms for the poor.

Guidebook – online and physical copies

This church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin has been at the centre of this community for almost nine hundred years providing tranquillity, charity, love and hope. We invite you to spend a few moments of reflection here today.

The prayer of St Francis of Assisi

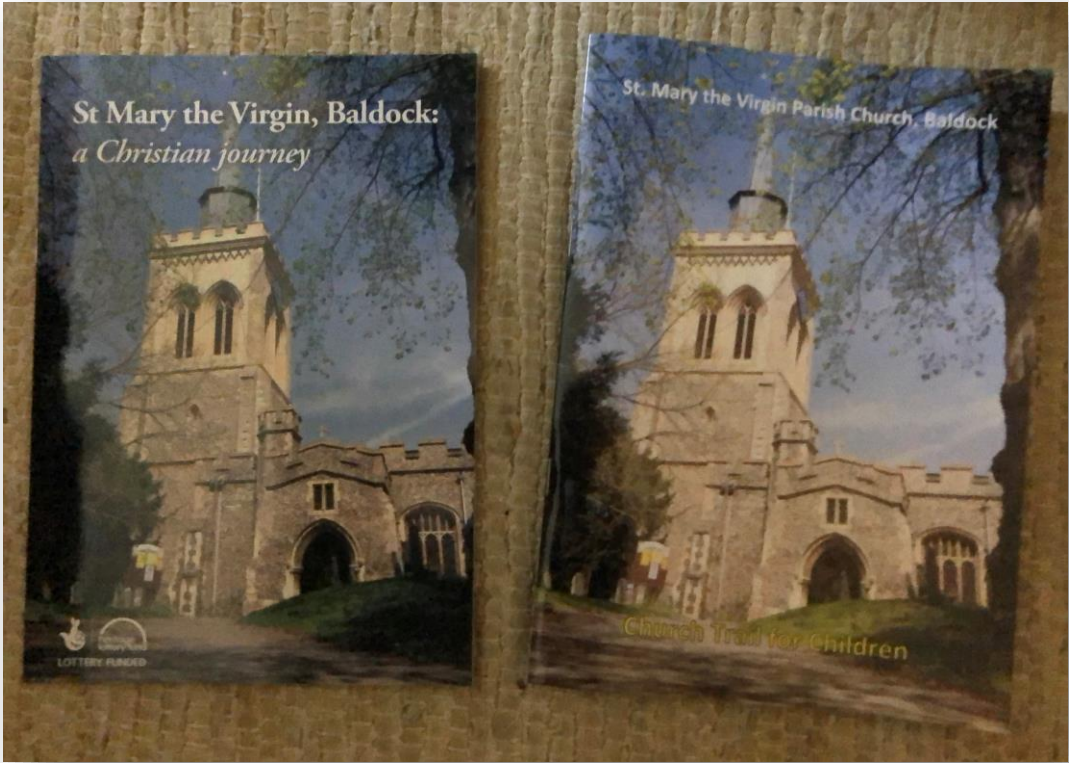
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Glossary

Arcade: a succession of arches, each counter-thrusting the next, supported by columns or piers.
Baptistery: part of church in which the font is found and baptisms take place.
Chalice: the cup used to contain the wine consecrated at the Eucharist (Holy Communion, Mass).
Chantry: an endowment for the maintenance of priests to celebrate Mass for the soul and the chapel or altar where the Masses were celebrated.
Credence table: a small table placed near the altar to hold the bread and wine to be used at the Eucharist.
Crossing: the junction of the four arms of a cruciform (cross-shaped) church.
Label Stop: decorative feature as a termination of a label, sometimes called a head-stop.
Ogee arch: decorative curved moulding on an arch.
Parclose screen: a screen or set of railings to enclose a side chapel.
Pax Brede: a small plate of ivory, metal or wood with a representation of a religious subject on the face and handle on the back formerly used for conveying the Kiss of Peace.
Piscina: a small bowl with a drain usually in a niche in the wall south of the altar.
Sedilia: seats for the celebrant and deacon on the south side of the chancel.
Transubstantiation: the pre-reformation term to describe the supposed conversion of the bread and the wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood.

Years	English History	Baldock History	Years ago	
0	Battle of Hastings	1066	Part of Weston Manor	1,000
	Order of the Knights Templar founded	1119	Earl of Pembroke gave land to the Knights Templar	
100	Civil War (King Stephen and Empress Matilda)	1150	Baldock a thriving town with church	900
	Henry II (Ruled 1154-1189)	1185	Market Charter granted	
	Richard I became king in 1189	1199		
	King John (Ruled 1199-1216)	1200		
200		1250		800
	Order of the Knights Templar disbanded and assets given to the Knights Hospitaller	1309	Town riots	
	Civil War (Edward II and Queen Isabella)	1312	Queen Isabella ransacks William Carey's home	
	The Black Death	1348		700
		1400	Major building in church	
400	Henry VI, Wars of the Roses	1459	Gild of Jesus licensed	600
		1500		
	Henry VIII, The Reformation	1535		
		1548	Rood loft removed in church	
500		1600		500
	The English Civil War (1642-1651)	1643	Charles I, passes through Baldock in 1648 on way to his execution in London in 1649	400
600		1700		
	Queen Anne (Reign 1702 - 1714)	1712	Church doorway bricked up during major work	300
		1750		
700		1800		
	George IV (Reign 1820-1811)	1826	North aisle and porch rebuilt	
	Queen Victoria, First census	1841	Spire and tower restored	
		1870	South porch restored	200
800		1901	Baptistery re-ordered	
	King Edward VII ascended the throne	1913	Organ replaced	
	King George V (Reign 1910-1936)	1931	Major work and decoration	
900		1950		100
	Queen Elizabeth II (Reign 1952 - present)	2000		
		2011	Tower and spire conservation	
		2016	Work on South aisle roof	
1,000				0

Acknowledgements: This guide was lovingly compiled by Rhian Dodds supplementing Gray's earlier guide and introducing new material from recent research. Photographs are by Laurence Browne and Revd James Sawyer.



Guidebook for children

What other symbols of Christian faith can you see around the church today?

Which Kings of England were mentioned above?

Can you name one other Norman King of England famous for his love of battle and crusades?

4. Coffin lid altar.

In the north chapel vestry area, on the floor under the window lies a coffin shaped Purbeck limestone lid with a foliated cross in relief. This is thought to originate from the 3rd quarter of the 13th century.



Above this lid there is a small curtain. Carefully draw this back to reveal remnants of the church deeds written in Latin on parchment. They detail an amount to be paid for the maintenance of the church building each year by themselves and their heirs in perpetuity. Are you related to William Cartel of Baldock or Walter Catteyl (1289)? They promised 2 pennies and 5 pennies each and every year to be paid on the feast of the blessed Mary in March and the feast of St. Michael in September. Do you know who John the son of John the spice merchant was or John Chapman his brother- was he a butcher too? They were some of the witnesses who signed this document.

Can you decipher what it says?

(Remember to draw the curtain back carefully to stop the light destroying this very old artefact.)

8. The Chancel

The eastern and earlier portion of the chancel has an east window of five lights. The extensive rebuilding of the church in the 14th century was funded by the flourishing merchants of this market town but the old chancel was not the responsibility of the Parish, but instead of the Rector and so this was not included in the rebuilding. This may be the only remaining part of the original chapel. The chancel embodies in its eastern half the remains of the walls of the earlier church. The rubble work of the walls, particularly on the south side, contain fragments of wrought stonework which suggest that this came from a twelfth century building.



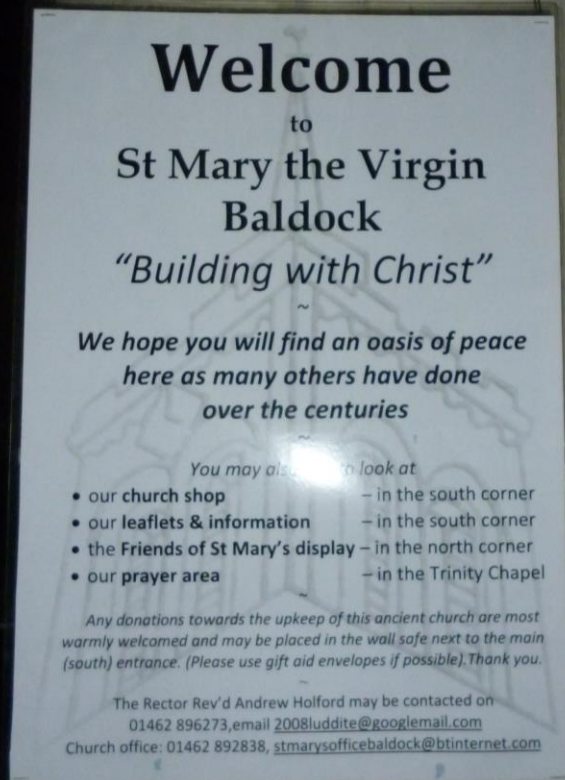
It is thought that the rebuilding work may not have been entirely completed on time due to the impact of the Black Death in 1348. Baldock was a prosperous and sizeable community by then, trading in wool that was to be exported to Flanders. Over the next 200 years the population of Baldock was hit hard by plague and pestilence.

Imagine what it might have been like living with the threat of the plague? What do you think people might have thought about when they saw what was going on around them. To find out more about the black death or bubonic plague, visit this link.



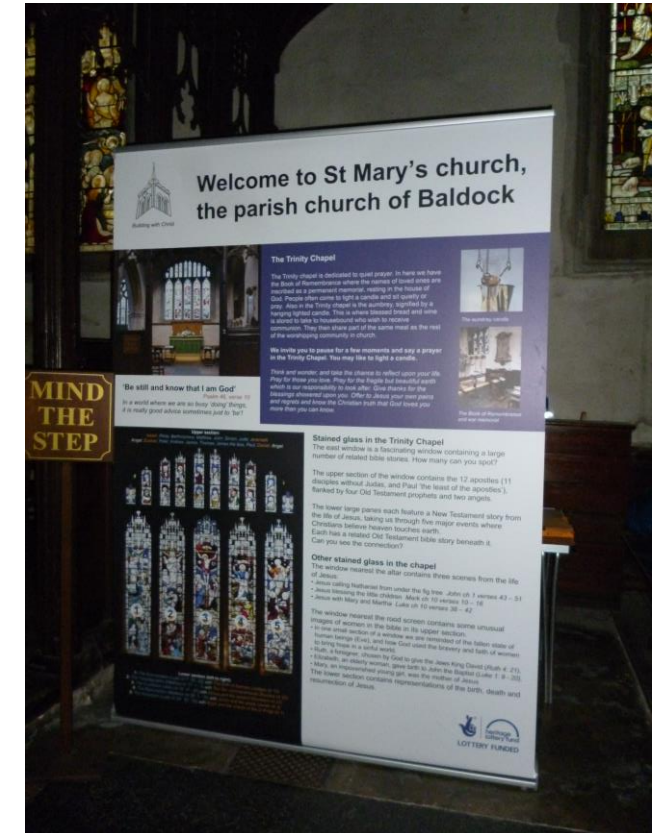
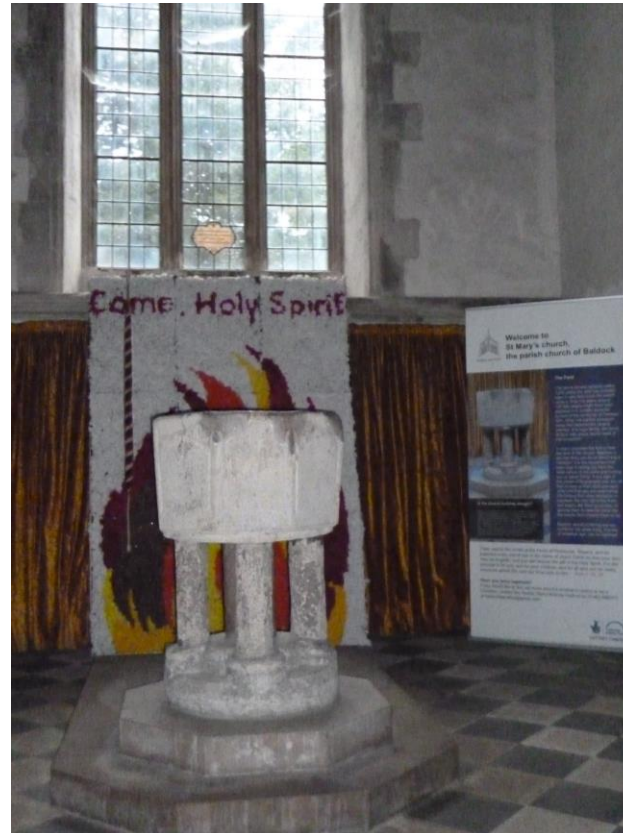
- Child friendly language
- Aimed at children and school parties
- Interactive trail
- Works alongside adult version
- QR codes

Inside the church



- Clear notices throughout
- Includes contact details
- Noticeboards
 - Up to date information
- Free literature
- A shop

Inside the church – banners



Practical considerations



- No candles or matches
- Lockable vestry and large safe
- Wall safe by the main door
- Volunteer capacity
- Volunteer location
- Town church means little misuse

Simple additions

St Mary the Virgin in Stotfold has been open every day from 9.30am to 3.30pm since 2000, but some people in the town didn't know the church was unlocked until a new vicar put a sandwich board outside the church saying "Church Open."



Further information

- Visit other churches
- [Diocese website](#)
 - [Open Churches Everyday](#)
- [ChurchCare](#)
- Rural churches
 - [Arthur Rank Centre](#)
- Other Diocese websites
 - [Diocese of London](#)



“Such initiatives are unlikely in themselves to ‘make new disciples’, but they will sow the seeds and build links so that those who are interested can find out more. Our aim should be to turn visitors into pilgrims and pilgrims into disciples.”

The Bishop of St Albans



**DIOCESE OF
ST ALBANS**
Living God's Love