



Baldock Circular walk

A flat walk across vast Hertfordshire farmland fields in an area filled with clues to Britain's Iron Age and Roman past. Follows part of the Icknield Way.

Length 19.6 km (12.2 mi)

Time: 4 hrs 30 mins. For the whole outing, including lunch, allow 8 hours

Toughness 4 out of 10

Transport Trains from London Kings Cross to Baldock. Take the train nearest to 10 am. Journey time 39 to 52 mins. Return trains run twice an hour. The lunchtime village comes 9.1 km (5.7 miles) into the walk – just over 2 hours of walking.

Maps OS Landranger 153: OS Explorer 193

Walk Notes Iron Age and Roman Settlement, Ashwell and the source of the River Cam and the Icknield Way: this is an almost flat walk across vast Hertfordshire farmland fields between villages in an area filled with clues to Britain's turbulent and colourful past. Follow part of the Icknield Way, Britain's oldest, long-distance footpath on this walk exploring the far north of Hertfordshire. Once a Roman road, the footpath takes you between the ancient village of Ashwell, an Iron Age and Roman settlement abandoned in the 5th Century but reclaimed in medieval times. In Ashwell, mentioned in the Domesday Book, the Parish Church dates from the 14th century and there are inscriptions relating to the plague. The Church tower is the highest in England and is a prominent landmark for many miles around. There is also a museum and the Springs in Ashwell which are the source of the river Cam.

Warning

This walk should not be undertaken after prolonged periods of rain, given much of it is across vast fields. In the dry, this walk is a relaxing amble through flat Hertfordshire countryside. The walk makes no pretence at incorporating woods, hills, or water features. Those more used to walking in Kent or West Sussex might find the countryside on offer in this walk around Baldock a little dull. It isn't, it's just different: if you accept it as such you should enjoy a relaxing, easy day's walking.

Twice a year the village of Ashwell puts on an impressive village event. Early in May on a Sunday villagers open up their properties for **Ashwell at Home**, when Morris Dancers entertain as you visit interesting and historic homes and buildings in the village. Pop-up eating places add to the cuisine on offer at the three pubs. Passes to all events cost £ 6 (2017). Then on August Bank Holiday Monday Ashwell stages its **Ashwell Show** in a large showground just to the north of the church. Events include gymkhana (horse and pony show jumping), dog displays, vintage car displays, lots of childrens events, music, and much more. Entry to the showground £ 10 (2016). To get the best out of the Baldock Walk we recommend it is posted to coincide with one of these two village events.

Shortening the Walk

Ashwell and Morden station is an alternative station to return to London Kings Cross. Approximately 3 km south-east from the center of Ashwell, this return option reduces the length of the main walk by 5 km (3.1 miles). Directions are given at the end of the walk text.

Lunch You are spoilt for choice between two good pubs and a hotel, all with character, in Ashwell, some 9 km (5.7 mi) into the walk. The first pub you come to, at 6 High Street, is the **Rose and Crown pub** (Tel [01462 742420](tel:01462742420)) which serves a variety

of food from sandwiches and snacks to more expensive cooked lunches. Attractive beer garden to rear of pub. Lunch is served Monday to Saturday: 12 noon to 14-00 hrs; Sunday 12 noon to 14-30 hrs.

Nearby, on Mill Street, is the **Bushel & Strike pub** (Tel [01462-742394](tel:01462-742394)), which serves bar meals and main meals, and a good selection of real ale, Monday to Saturday: 12 noon to 15-00 hrs, Sundays: 12 noon to 17-00 hrs.

At the far end of the High Street is the **Three Tuns Hotel** (Tel [01462-742107](tel:01462-742107)), which serves food all day on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays, in very comfortable surroundings indoors plus a large beer garden.

Tea The suggested tea place is **Café Plus** in the High Street, Baldock, which is open until 17-30 hrs Monday to Saturday and from 10-30 hrs to 14-00 hrs on Sundays. Alternatively - and for Sunday walkers – try one of **four pubs** passed or the **Delizia Trattoria**. Note: in neighbouring town Letchworth Garden City, temperance was promoted when the new town was first built and to this day there are very few watering holes to refresh the weary traveller. Letchworth's residents must have sneaked over to Baldock, in order to explain why there are so many pubs in Baldock.

Status Last updated Sunday 12 May 2019

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By Car **Start** SG7 5BU

Help National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Travelline SE (bus times): 0871 200 2233 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

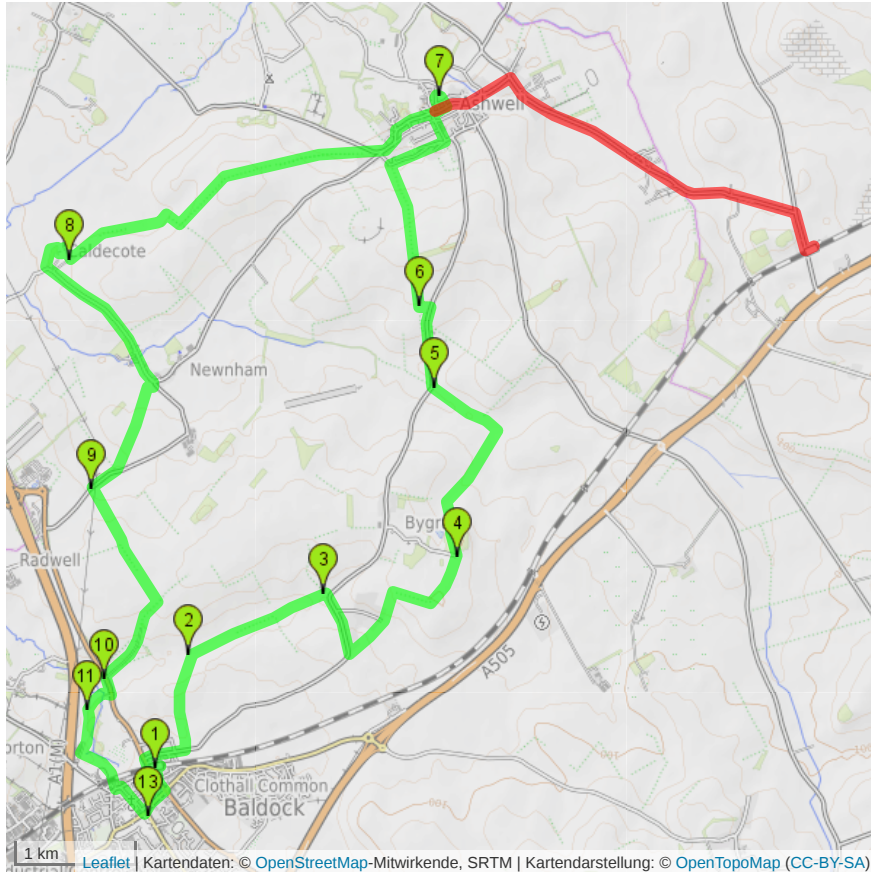
Version May-19

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Walk Directions

OpenStreetMap (not OS) mapping is used in the PDF for licence reasons.

Baldock Circular



1. **[1]** From platform 2 walk down the steps and through the underpass taking the exit straight ahead. Exit **Baldock Railway Station** and walk straight down Station Road to the main road. *Turn right* on to the main A507 and in 85 metres pass under the Railway bridge.
2. In 60 metres *turn right* into Bygrave Road and continue straight along ignoring Larkins Close on your right and then Salisbury Road on your left. **[!]** 55 metres after Salisbury Road and by Laymore Farm you *turn left* onto a signposted public bridleway. Ignore the access way to the farmhouse on the left and continue ahead between two hedges and in 120 metres emerge on to open fields, by a footpath post on your right.
3. Continue slightly uphill following the footpath, initially left, on a bearing of 340 degrees (This path is sometimes marked out but not always – depending on whether the farmer has been working on the field. You should aim for the mini electricity pylon (the last in a line) in the distance and a footpath post which has 3 directional disks on it. This will be evident when you reach the brow of the hill). After going uphill for 300 metres you start to go downhill.
4. **[2]** In 200 metres at the field boundary, and path junction, by the footpath post (where the path ahead links up to the Icknield Way), *turn right* along the bridleway following a line of pylons. A hedge and a ditch are on your left-hand side. Keep straight on ignoring all ways off. In 550 metres you will come to a gap in the hedge where the pylons will go off to the left. There is a house in the distance to your right (you are aiming to its left) and you should continue straight on now between fields (the hedge and tree-line previously on your left has recently been grubbed up). Follow the path cum track until you reach a road in 400 metres.
5. **[3]** Bear right across a patch of concrete - where you will find the famous "Dunghill of Bygrave" - a large heap of smelly manure. On its far side *turn right* along the road into the village of **Bygrave**. In 90 metres ignore Wedon Way on your left hand side to continue straight on past a row of houses on your left hand side.
6. **[!]** In 300 metres and at the last house (No 1 Ashwell Road), where the road swings right, *turn left* on to a footpath through a wooden kissing gate, with a metal farm gate to its left and by a two-armed footpath sign, your direction 45 degrees. Continue straight on with gardens to your left and vast crop fields to your right, on a grassy car-wide path.
7. In 110 metres the gardens end and you come to a junior playing field with football goal posts. Continue straight on, heading down. 20 metres beyond the end of the playing fields you pass under electricity pylons and in a further 90 metres go through a kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate to come out onto a tarmac road with a detached house straight ahead.
8. *Turn right* for 15 metres, *then left*, uphill, along the left-hand edge of open fields with a line of pylons on your right hand side, your direction 20 degrees. Continue uphill with a hedge on your left hand side. In 100 metres pass under electricity pylons as they bear to

the right and keep ahead. In a further 250 metres at the top of the hill, you come to a wooden bench and a grassy track. *Turn right* along this track and continue straight ahead, your direction 110 degrees. (There are fine views here across the countryside)

9. In 250 metres by another wooden bench the path *bears left*. There is a small brick building to your right and pylons on your left hand side. Follow the pylons, eventually passing under them in 250 metres. In a further 100 metres you come to the end of this track, with a bungalow and farm buildings on your right hand side and you are now at a tarmac access road.
10. **[4]** Cross this road towards the wood (**Park Wood**) to follow a three-armed footpath sign. Enter the wood, with a piggery on your right hand side, between gateposts for a missing farm gate and in 10 metres *take the left* of two paths, your direction 330 degrees. Continue straight on, gently downhill on a car-wide track into the wood ignoring all turnings off. In 200 metres cross a path, next to a footpath post, to continue ahead for a further 200 metres, aiming for a fence gap at the bottom of the wood (the stile previously here has been removed).
11. Pass through the gap and *bear right* across the field on a usually well-cleared path (check a little further on the left, if it isn't obvious at first), the path's official bearing being 40 degrees. In 160 metres by a footpath post you cross a farm track and *keep ahead*, your direction now 30 degrees, between fields. In 300 metres you come to a T-junction, *turn left*, bearing 300 degrees, to continue on a grassy track with a ditch on your left.
12. In 300 metres pass a 3 plank footbridge on your left by a footpath sign and in a further 10 metres pass under pylons. Keep on this grassy track and in 400 metres you reach a road – Claybush Road (formerly Bygrave Road). **[5]** *Turn right* uphill along the road and in 400 metres you pass a lone house on the right (The Knoll) - recently rebuilt as a substantial property. 170 metres past this property, as the road levels out, you come to a derelict farm building on your left hand side, to the right of which is the signposted Icknield Way and Partridge Hill.
13. *Turn left* along a car wide farm track to join the Icknield Way and in 60 metres **[6]** *turn right* with the track to continue gently uphill, with a hedge on your right-hand side, your direction due north. In 600 metres, at the top of the hill, continue straight on. The path now begins to descend and in 200 metres, as it swings to the left, keep ahead on a narrow path between hedges. Soon you will see **Ashwell Church** spire to your right-hand side and **Arbury Banks** to your left (which is the site of the Iron Age and Roman Settlements).
14. In 80 metres you pass a signed path to the left to Arbury Banks. In a further 80 metres you come out on to an access track and you pass two cottages on your left hand side. Continue down on this track past a yard and in 140 metres you reach a junction with a boarded-up house on your left hand side (now mostly hidden by undergrowth). **[1]** *Turn right* here, bearing 80 degrees, along a worn track and continue straight on with houses and allotments on your left, and later houses, on your right-hand side. Ignore all ways off.
15. In 350 metres the track becomes a footpath, parallel with Ashwell Street to the left. In 140m you join Ashwell Street, in a further 20 metres coming to a main road junction at a bend in the road. *Turn left* at this junction into Bear Lane and descend this road, passing Dixies Close on the left in 80 metres. In a further 60 metres pass Silver Street to the right then Back Street on the left. Keep ahead, now down a restricted entry way and in 60 metres at a T-junction with the High Street, you are now in the village of **Ashwell**. *turn right*, in 30 metres coming to the **Rose and Crown pub**, one of the suggested options for your lunchtime stop. To get to the **Three Tuns Hotel** (another lunch stop option) keep on along the High Street, ignoring ways off. In 170 metres you pass the Ashwell United Reformed Church and churchyard on your left and in a further 50 metres you come to the hotel.
16. After lunch, to visit **St Mary's Church, Ashwell** (recommended), coming out of the Rose and Crown pub, *turn right* along the High Street for 130 metres, then *turn left* down Church Lane, then ahead down Church Path to reach the church **[7]**. On some bank holidays the church opens its tower to the public: a climb to the top is rewarded by fine views over Hertfordshire.
17. Coming out of the church, bear right down its gravel drive for 40 metres and exit the churchyard by its lychgate, onto Mill Street. 50 metres down the road on your right is the **Bushel & Strike pub** (your third lunch stop option). To continue with the walk from the church lychgate: *turn left* along Mill Street and in 30 metres, at the road junction with Swan Street, keep ahead down the narrow Alms Lane (with the museum on your right).
18. In 60 metres you come out on to the High Street, where you *turn right*, in 30 metres passing the Rose and Crown pub on your left-hand side. Walk ahead through the village. You pass Ashwell Gallery on your left. Where the road swings to the left you pass Ashwell Village Hall on your right-hand side. The road then swings to the right and Back Street joins from the left.
19. In 80 metres *turn right* into Hinxworth Road. In 30 metres *bear left* onto a signposted public bridleway, a grassy track, your direction west. This track gradually ascends, providing good views of Ashwell village and its church behind you. In 150 metres you pass a tennis court on your left. After 650 metres a permissive path joins you from the left. Keep ahead, still uphill, through a field boundary. In 400 metres you reach the top of the incline (**Newnham Hill**) and the path swings to the left, your direction now 220 degrees.
20. With some fine views out to the easterly end of **The Chilterns** (from Pegsdon Hills via Barton Hills to Sharpenhoe Clappers, and with Pulloxhill Water Tower to the right of it in the valley), the path begins to descend and in 500 metres, at a path T-junction, you *turn right*, downhill, with a hedge on your left, your direction 300 degrees. In 130 metres, *turn left* through a gap in the hedge along a signposted footpath, your initial direction 225 degrees.

21. Continue ahead along this path between fields and in 300 metres a path joins from the left. Follow the path towards a line of pylons, and in 600 metres you come to the hamlet of **Caldecote**. You pass a pair of cottages on your right-hand side then *turn right* [8] on a concrete road, giving access to some large industrial barns, then in 70 metres, *turn left* over a concrete hardstanding into the grounds of the previously derelict **St Mary Magdalene Church, Caldecote** . recently restored by the splendidly named Friends of Friendless Churches organisation. Walk behind the church, to go past a pond on your left, across grass and join a path as it swings left along a left hand field boundary, your direction 210 degrees - ignoring a path straight ahead.
22. In 150 metres, in the field corner, *turn left*, to join Caldecote Road. In 40 metres ignore the turning to the left. Keep ahead on Caldecote Road, your direction 165 degrees, along this tarmac lane between vast fields, and after 1 km the lane descends into the hamlet of **Newnham**.
23. Go past **St Vincent's Church** on your left-hand side and go over a bridge and on through the hamlet. Ignore a footpath to the right. In a further 100 metres you reach a road junction. *Turn right* [!] and immediately right again through a narrow, low gap in a tall hedge, with a footpath signpost (PF6 Newnham Road 1/2) on the right in the hedge (can be overgrown) on a four-way road signpost, just before a Give Way-sign. Through the hedge, *turn left* with an indistinct path to the left of a garden and in 35 metres emerge in an arable field corner. *Turn right* along the boundary past a house and in 35m follow a yellow marker on a fence post to cross the field on a usually well-cleared path on a bearing of 200 degrees to its far right corner. [If you can't find a walkable path across the field, re-trace your steps to the road and skirt the field along it, turning right along the road and right again with the road in 500 metres]
24. In 750 metres leave the field by going up a flight of new wood and earth steps up a bank to come out onto Newnham Road and *turn right* along it, without a pavement (watch out for the fast flowing traffic). [9] In 250 metres, with a National Grid pylon on your left, *turn left* to cross the road and continue along an unmarked Permissive Path (a field boundary), gently uphill, your initial direction 160 degrees. **Note** At the top of this path your way ahead might be blocked by a large building aggregate mound (2016 to 2019). Instead of taking the permissive path to the left of the national grid pylon, try the path on the immediate other side of the field boundary (to the right of the Pylon).
25. In 450 metres, with the large building aggregate mound either directly ahead of you or to your left (depending on which path you have taken) either make your way best you can around the mound or just continue ahead over rough ground. Ignore the track to your right and *keep ahead* , slightly left, your direction now 150 degrees (on a car wide track).
26. In 550 metres the track joins the Icknield Way at a T-junction. *Turn right* on to the Icknield Way. You now follow this broad track in a south-westerly direction, gently downhill. In 300 metres you pass two barns and a house on your left. The track now becomes concrete and you pass a farm with stables on your right. After a further 350 metres along this track you come out to a T- junction with a main road – Salisbury Road.
27. [10] At Salisbury Road, cross over with care and *turn left* along a narrow pavement. In 30 metres there is a “Welcome to Baldock” sign on your left. Continue straight on along the pavement. In 150 metres there is a footpath sign on your right next to Blackhorse Farm. *Turn right* on this path between the Farm and a bungalow on a right (signposted Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve).
28. In 30 metres pass straight between a white cottage on your right and a brick house on your left, your direction 305 degrees. Cross over a bridge, and keep ahead, your direction 260 degrees. Pass through a metal fieldgate and follow the path straight ahead with a wooden then wire fence on your right and a (dried up) stream on your left.
29. [11] Keep straight on this path as it winds through a wooded area. In 200 metres you reach a junction with a signpost marked Kingfisher Way. *Turn left* here and walk up some wooden steps, entering **Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve**. Follow the path for 50 metres and you pass another Kingfisher Way sign on your left hand side. Keep on this path.
30. In 75 metres ignore the Kingfisher Way turning left by a marker post on your left hand side and continue straight ahead, your direction 190 degrees, ignoring the path to the left. Keep straight on, in 160 metres a path on the left leads to an info panel for the Ivel Springs and River and a bench overlooking the springs, in 120 metres you ignore a metal kissing gate on your right by an equestrian center and in a further 10m you [!] *turn left* at a footpath post, your direction 100 degrees.
31. Follow the path uphill for 60 metres to another footpath marker post on your right hand side. [12] Continue in the same direction along a grassy path, keeping a wire fence and a hedge on your right. In 75 metres ignore a faint footpath to the left and keep straight on this path, in another 75 metres passing a football pitch on your right-hand side.
32. [!] In 110 metres you come out on a small gravel car park area at a path T-junction 10 metres further along with a five-way footpath signpost and a narrow, low railway tunnel on the other side of it. *Continue ahead* through the tunnel to walk between high metal fences on the other side and in 60m reach a road at a T-junction. *Turn left* along the road (but notice **The Orange Tree** pub about 100 metres on the right). In 40 metres *turn right* into Church Street and you continue straight on this road, passing the Parish Church on your right hand side.
33. At the end of Church Street, at a T-junction with Hitchin Street, with a Barclays Bank on your left and a hotel, bar & restaurant called **The George at Baldock** on your right, **you have a choice:** for **Cafe Plus**, the suggested tea stop, cross over the main road opposite the Baldock Museum and continue in the same direction to the left of the Museum to find the cafe in 35 metres on your right hand

side. **Else** *turn left* along White Horse Street. You walk straight down towards some traffic lights 250 metres away, along the way passing **The Rose & Crown** pub on your right and **Delizia Trattoria** on the left.

34. At the traffic lights *turn left* and walk past the **Old White Horse pub** – an alternative tea option - which is on your left hand side. In 40 metres you pass **The Engine** pub on your left hand side and opposite this is the station approach road. Walk up the road and reach **Baldock Railway Station** in 100 metres.

Baldock Circular - shortening the walk to Ashwell and Morden Station

1. Coming out of **The Rose & Crown** pub, *turn right*, direction 70 degrees to walk along the High Street. In 200 metres you pass a (road) signpost on your left, indicating Ashwell station ahead, direction 80 degrees, as you cross over Kingsland Way. In 20 metres you pass **The Three Tuns Hotel** on your left. In 80 metres you pass **The Springs** on your left (a potential picnic site) to continue ahead.
2. In 300 metres you reach a T-junction (signposted to the right Ashwell Station 2 mi), to *turn right*, direction 140 degrees, to walk along Station Road.
3. After 2.3 km you come to a T-junction. *Turn right* (there is a road sign for the station). In 30 metres you pass a road sign for Odsey and 30 metres further on you pass the Odsey war memorial on your right.
4. In 180 metres you reach **The Jester** public house on your right and after 40 metres *turn left* to walk down the road leading to **Ashwell and Morden Railway Station**. Trains back to London depart from platform No 1.

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