

THE LEDBURY LETTER

NUMBER 116

Autumn 2023

50th Anniversary Issue



Butcher Row House Museum

Ledbury & District Civic Society

“Looking after Ledbury...”



*Burgage Hall, Church Lane, Ledbury,
Herefordshire HR8 1DW*

Objectives of the Society...

To stimulate public interest; promote high standards of planning and architecture; and secure the preservation, protection and improvement of features of historic, natural and public interest.

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

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Technical Editor: Nicola Forde

The Ledbury and District Civic Society Trust Ltd
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Notice is hereby given that membership records of the Ledbury & District Society Trust are held on a database system. Those requiring access to the data held concerning themselves should contact the Membership Secretary. These are for administration purposes only, and an individual's details can be removed on receipt of a written request.

Copy deadline for the next Ledbury Letter: Friday 9th February 2024

Autumn 2023 Chair's Report

Mark Lister

This is my first contribution to the Society's newsletter following my confirmation as Chair of the Society at the last meeting of the Board of Trustees. It is a great privilege to be entrusted with this role and I hope that I will be able to do it justice in the coming years.

Before looking forward it is important to thank those who have contributed to the work of the Society and have now stepped back. Mary Winfield retired as a Trustee and Board member at the AGM following many years of dedicated work for the Society. We shall miss her wise counsel.

Patrick Goode took over responsibility for the organisation of the Society's monthly talks following their resumption after the strictures of lockdown. An eclectic programme which, judging by the size of the audiences, proved extremely popular over the last two years. We are most grateful to Patrick for his hard work. Board member Nick Morris has agreed to take on the task and the Autumn programme features elsewhere in this newsletter.

At the first meeting of the Board following the AGM we were able to co-opt three new board members. Ann Lumb, Hilary Davis and Stuart Gray agreed to join the Board and we are working out how best to use their different skills to advance the work of the Society.

We are intending to update the Society's website over the coming months and to improve our social media presence in an effort to raise awareness of our work, attract new members and improve the heritage experience for visitors to the Town.

We are also working with other organisations in the town, particularly Ledbury Places, to provide facilities and equipment for school visits to our heritage sites.

By the time this newsletter is published this year's Heritage Open Days festival will have taken place in September. The society has raised its involvement in this national festival and I hope that you will have seen the publicity and taken the opportunity to visit both the Butcher Row House Museum and the Burgage Hall.

The Society's Programme of Talks

Autumn 2023

Nick Morris

Our first three talks in the 2023-24 season will range over a variety of subjects. As usual, they will have their starting point in Ledbury/ Herefordshire but will connect with issues affecting the wider world.

29th September 2023.

Matthew Engel - *British Society in the 1950s, 60s & 70s*

How do we remember the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s? Matthew Engel, FT columnist, and author of *Life in Elizabeth's Britain : Part 1 : The Way it was 1952-79*, will draw on a wide range of sources - newspapers, books, personal memories - to give us his view.

27th October 2023.

Will Frecknall - *The future of British Railways*

Thirty years after privatisation, what is the state of British railways? Are we lucky still to have a railway station at Ledbury? Will Frecknall, Chair of Rail & Bus for Herefordshire looks into the railway future.

24th November 2023

Denise North - *The Herefordshire Hoard*

The Anglo-Saxons and Vikings weren't much good at architecture, but they did create beautiful objects. The Herefordshire hoard is of very high quality and an unusually late date (c. 878). As Denise North will explain, thanks to a local campaign, the objects will stay in Herefordshire.

The programme of talks will continue in 2024 on the last Friday of each month except June when we make way for the Poetry Festival and hold the talk on the third Friday. For your diary the dates will be:

January 26th

February 23rd

March 29th

April 26th

May 31st

June 21st

All at 7.30 pm in the Burgage Hall.

Shopfront Improvement Programme

Mark Lister

This year the Civic Society has contributed over £4,000 from its small grants scheme towards a great Ledbury Town Council initiative to provide grants to local businesses to help improve their shop fronts. This was inspired by a £90,000 grant the Council received in 2021 to support and encourage the reopening of town centres following the Covid lockdowns. The Council approached the Civic Society with a suggestion that we could offer to enhance the council's £750 grant by up to £250 per business thus increasing the maximum sum available to each business to £1,000.

The Board of the Society agreed to this suggestion as it was felt that such works would help to reinvigorate the town centre.

In the last 15 months more than 20 local businesses have had grant applications approved by the council and the Society has contributed more than £4,000 towards the project. The Board believe that this is money well spent as the money has assisted hard pressed shop and business owners to refresh their shopfronts and thereby improve the attractiveness of the town centre for visitors and locals alike.

The Burgage Hall

Nicola Forde

We are very pleased to report that acoustic boards have been installed in the Hall - with excellent results and without damaging the aesthetics of the Hall. A specialist company was employed to specify what was needed and to complete the not uncomplicated and tricky installation. If you've used the Hall recently you may not even have noticed they are there, but look up and you'll see discreet white panels lying against the pitch of the ceiling. Come and hear the difference for yourself at the Society's first talk of the new season in September (Friday 29th at 7.30pm).

We have produced a brochure showing all the facilities and charges. As many will know the hall is run voluntarily by the trustees and the income it brings in is a vital contribution to the funds we have available to maintain the building and support other projects. If you are aware of anyone who might need somewhere to hold an event, then do please ask us for copies by emailing bookings@ledburycivicsociety.org or calling 07977781826 (leave a message or text if there is no reply).

The Butcher Row House Museum

Ken Chapman

The Museum is as busy as ever, welcoming 400 or so visitors per week, many of whom pay us the kindest compliments and donate generously. As always, we are very grateful to all our volunteers who make this happen.

The Museum has a notable collection of musical instruments, donated by the widow of Colonel Thomas Johnson. He collected these during his overseas tours of duty which, given the range of instruments, must have spanned the world. To bring these to life, one of our volunteers and committee member, Barry Sharples, has developed an iPad player so that visitors can now hear how each of the instruments sounds. Many thanks to Barry for this excellent work.

As you read this, the Heritage Open Day weekends of 9th/10th and 16th/17th September are taking place in the Burgage Hall, Museum and Heritage Centre. In the Hall, we are displaying some of our artefacts in storage, in particular Victorian dresses and costumes. Many thanks to committee member Jenny Silcock for her time and expertise preparing these displays.

Finally, we are looking for more volunteers to help run the Museum next year. It's a great way to meet people and if you can spare just two hours per fortnight we'd like to hear from you. Please contact either Carol Cullen on 01531 632 773 or Ken Chapman on 01531 632 988 for more details.

And if you can't volunteer, do come and visit us, Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 4pm.

Our last opening day this year will be Saturday 28th October and the Museum will re-open on Tuesday 26th March 2024.

Have a good Autumn!

Heritage Open Days in Ledbury

Christine Tustin

This nationwide festival celebrating our built environment is a wonderful opportunity to promote Ledbury and its wonderful buildings to a far wider audience than we are normally able to reach.

In addition to the atmosphere and character of the whole of the town centre we are blessed with Church Lane, surely every visitor's idea of a medieval street? And not only is it lined with some of the town's oldest buildings, but many of them are open to the public – for free.

Our museums, and the church, are central to Ledbury's visitor economy. This year we have coordinated entries for the Butcher Row Museum, the Old Grammar School (both the Heritage Centre and the Upper Floor) and the Burgage Hall – which has put on a special exhibition of costumes normally in store – and refreshments as well! We have 'marketed' these with a special link to The Museum Quarter where people can do a circular route to the Burgage Hall, from the High Street, through to Butcher Row and across to the Heritage Centre, taking in the Painted Room as they return to the High Street – or vice versa.

We are hoping that resulting visits will make it all worthwhile, raising awareness of our delightful town to people from further afield but also to encourage residents to explore what is on their doorstep!

Planning News

Nicola Forde

The proposal for development behind The Knapp on The Homend next to Tesco, **application number P223248/F, developer McCarthy Stone**, has been revised to some extent in response to comments received. However amongst other issues there is still opposition to the principle of the development which does not include affordable units.

The Viaduct Housing site, developer Bloor Homes, (P171532/O). Work has started on the first phase of this development which comprises 223 dwellings, associated drainage, and internal roads, (footways, footpath/cycleway & spine road) and play area.

The Civic Society tries to keep abreast of major planning applications and developments and we do comment on applications and proposals which we feel may affect the town. But sometimes we miss things so please do get in touch if you spot something you think we should be looking at.

Ledbury Civic Society, 50 Years

Patrick Goode

1973, when the Society was founded, is a barely recognisable world, as Celia Kellett points out in the accompanying article. Yet the founding objectives of the Society have remained the same.

The objectives were defined quite broadly, and in the next fifty years the Society has tended to focus on some objectives rather than others as circumstances have dictated. Its original model was the Civic Trust (1959-2009), whose primary purpose was to improve the quality of historic buildings and the general quality of urban life.

A more immediate stimulus to the founding of the Society was to object to Herefordshire Council's proposals for an Inner Relief Road (running from Mabel's Furlong to the Hereford Road, parallel to and to the west of the High Street). Heavy traffic was a particular problem for Ledbury with its many old and listed buildings. It was claimed vibrations from traffic were damaging the foundations of the buildings. Campaigners instead wanted an outer relief road resulting in the current bypass (Leadon Way) completed in 1989.

Although the Society was founded in relation to a single issue, the date of its foundation turned out to be propitious. Ledbury was then a small town of 4,000 people, with a rather antiquated stock of houses and public buildings. In the next decade, many of these buildings were Listed, ensuring their preservation. As matters turned out, the Society was in a strong position to support valuable projects, such as the Butcher Row Museum (opened in 1979) and the Burgage Hall refurbishment (opened 1987), and to ward off threats to Ledbury Park.

Soon after the foundation of the Society its activities were supported by an innovative and possibly unique method of fundraising: paper salvage. Paper of all sorts was collected from houses, tidied into bundles, and loaded into a collector's lorry. Its destination was as surprising as the idea itself : initially for egg boxes in East Anglia, then for bedding at a Tewkesbury racing stable! The paper was collected in St Katherine's Barn and generated up to £2000 per annum. Income generated went towards, for example, the restoration of the Painted Room (£3,000), restoration work in St Michael's Church Tower (£10,000) as well as towards the Society's own projects.

The first fifty years of the Society have shown that it has remained faithful to its original objectives, and made an indispensable contribution to the life of Ledbury.

A link to a detailed history of the society can be found on our website - <http://ledburycivicsociety.org/about-us>.

Ledbury 50 Years Ago

Celia Kellett

What was life like in Ledbury in 1973? There were no computers, no mobile phones, much smaller cars and lorries and far fewer people, less than 4,000; there are two and a half times that now. There was no Deer Park or New Mills estates and no bypass either, just a small market town surrounded by orchards, fields and woodland.

In 1973 there were two secondary schools in the town, Ledbury County and the Grammar School based at Upper Hall, which would merge in 1978. A much loved outdoor swimming pool off the Hereford Road was about to be replaced in 1974 by the indoor pool in Longacre. Little Marcle Road was still called Gas Works Lane in those days. And in The Homend on the corner of Bank Crescent stood Ledbury's main Post Office (now St. Michael's Hospice shop), plus Newtown sub-office in Victoria Road; there were two deliveries of post every weekday and post was collected from the wall boxes several times a day, today it's only once. The Police Station in Worcester Road had a complement of seventeen officers, a Chief Inspector, 2 Sergeants, 11 Constables, 1 Detective Constable, 1 Cadet plus 1 Policewoman - today even one is as rare as hen's teeth.

In 1971 metrication meant that Pounds Shillings and Pence had become Pounds and Pence and it took many people some time to adjust to the change even in 1973. Lloyds Bank and the Midland (later HSBC) Bank were then both trading from the High Street whilst the National Westminster Bank (later NatWest) and Barclays Bank traded from The Homend. Back in 1966 Barclaycard had introduced the first credit card and the other banks were quick to follow suit. But many local workers in the town did not have bank accounts in 1973, they were paid in cash each week. For those who could afford a telephone, the numbers in Ledbury were then only 4 digits long!

There were only small supermarkets in The High Street and The Homend, no Tesco, Co-op or Aldi instead traditional grocers such as Bebbington's in The Homend still provided for those who preferred to shop there, whilst a few doors up there was a thriving Decorators Centre for the DIYers. And up beyond Bank Crescent was to be found Pip Powell's cycle shop, which survived until only a few years ago. The building across the road, which is now the Olive Tree Restaurant, was an antiques centre. At No. 8 High Street at this time was an ironmongers, known to have been here for over a century, with a large copper kettle hanging above its facade to display the shop's trade. Tilley's at Nos.16-17, High Street provided printing and stationery, as well as books, novelties and watches and had branches in Ross-on-Wye and Malvern Link. There were several newsagents in the town and The Barn House in New Street was the home of an antiquarian books business. Facing it across the road was the Vine Stores providing wines and spirits. The Old Drill Hall stood on the site of today's Co-op.

Back in 1973 there were several photographers providing film processing, essential to get your family snaps developed, which could be expensive and time consuming - as you had to wait while your film was sent away to be developed. Chemists also provided photographic services in addition to dispensing prescriptions and providing advice and there were two: Boots at No.14 High Street, and Mr F.L. Born at No. 29 The Homend who later moved down to No. 23 now the Blue Cross Charity Shop. The Cottage Hospital in The Homend provided for medical emergencies. There were three GPs, Drs. Harper and Burrowes at The Steppes House in New Street and Dr Steen at 16 The Southend, where they held their surgeries. The town also had dental and optician services.

In 1973 it was possible to rent or buy on hire purchase or even part exchange a radio or a television set from Mr Lacey at Top Cross, while Eager's were selling electrical appliances in what has now become Ledbury Shopping Mall and there were numerous shops in town selling shoes and clothing - menswear, ladies fashions and even children's wear and nursery goods. There were no charity shops then and a very different range of merchandise than we see today.

A look to the future - Ledbury in 2073 Patrick Goode

Captain Hindsight is well known to be wise after the event, but Captain Foresight's predictions usually are well wide of the mark. Still, inviting the derision of anyone who is unfortunate enough to read this article in 2073, I will give my view of what Ledbury will be like fifty years from now. And I will try to be positive. In the current period that is not very easy!

So now, I will look back from 2073 - Ledbury is still here! – and much quieter. What a noisy and dirty means of transport the internal combustion engine (1880-2030) was, and how much quieter are electric cars and lorries. In the first few years (2030 onwards), they took some getting used to and there were quite a few accidents involving unwary pedestrians. To use the phrase so popular with transport experts, there has been a 'modal shift' as many people now use electric bikes.

Many years of hard work ensured the difficult transition to a more sustainable agriculture. The period of industrialised agriculture (1945-2030) has been replaced by restorative agriculture, as farmers put life back into the soil, and restore diversity of habitats. In 2073, older readers think that the new type of landscape, with more wild grass and tree planting at the edge of fields, looks rather scruffy, but people who have grown up with the new landscapes celebrate their diversity.

We still have a railway (this shows how optimistic I am!). Out goes old style two rails, in comes – maglev (you may have seen one at Birmingham airport), which takes us to New Street in 30 minutes.

By that date, 75% of the population could be 70 years or more old, and there will be at least 20 centenarians. Fortunately our houses are much warmer, (better built and fuelled by local generated energy - wind farms & solar farms or a small local nuclear power station?).

There was a big change in peoples' diet in the 1980-2020 period, as a result of foreign travel and the availability of new types of food. But in the last fifty years, there has been a reversion to the old custom of local and seasonal food, a custom which has been made much easier by the development of sustainable agriculture in the local area.

I only wish that I were here to see Ledbury 2073!

The following is obviously, not a reflection on the experience of serving on the LDCS Committee! Thanks to Prue Yorke for sharing it with us.

*Oh give me your pity, I'm on a committee
which means that from morning to night
we attend and amend, and contend and defend
without a decision in sight.
We concur and confer, we defer and demur
and re-iterate all of our thoughts.
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda
and consider a load of reports.
We compose and propose, we suppose and oppose
and the points of procedure are fun,
but though various notions are brought up as motions
there's terribly little gets done!
We resolve and absolve, but never dissolve,
since it's out of the question for us.
What a shattering pity to end our committee,
where else could we make such a fuss?!*

Anon

Contrary to the sentiment expressed above thanks to the hard work of committee members over the last 50 years the Society has achieved much. These press cuttings feature just some of the achievements and some of those committee members - to whom we are all grateful. *Cuttings supplied by Veslemøy Lunt and Prue Yorke .*

New group to safeguard the civic amenities

A NEW society is to be formed to safeguard the civic amenities of Ledbury. This was agreed at a public meeting called by Ledbury and District Residents' Association at the Market Street theatre last week.

An audience of about 50 members suggested that the residents' association should change its name and widen its scope to incorporate the functions of a civic amenities group.

The members are to be asked to consider the idea. If they are not willing to reform in this way efforts will be made to set up an independent organisation.

A large majority supported the idea of transforming the existing association into a broader based society. But its secretary, Mr P. H. W. Sharpe-Neel, had some reservations and felt that the civic amenities group should be a separate entity.

Mr Sharpe-Neel said that the association was formed to help the town meet cost problems and some of its members might feel that it should not be liable in emergency until the battle was won.

RECRUITING

Officers agreed that it was because the association had been a bit of a hard slog through its handling of the traffic that the idea of the

association, explained that the idea of the proposed new group would be to protect the environment, encourage high quality in architecture and building processes, buildings of distinction and historic interest, protect the countryside, encourage and preserve business, whether from local origin or not, and to create a sense of civic pride.

Some people wanted changes in Ledbury while others preferred it as it is.

"But there is a common bond for both groups," he said. "We do not want plans for any situation made to anyone outside. We want a hand in our own town plan."

DIFFICULT

The residents' association had found it difficult to secure plans made in Ledbury on the main road, said Mr Sharpe-Neel. One of 79 members of Herefordshire County Council, which made decisions about Ledbury, does represent the rural district and only was represented the town.

On the Hereford-Worcester County Council, one of a total of 42 members, there would be only two for the whole of the rural district.

Mr Sharpe-Neel asked: "What changes will they have to accede to - how do we secure those votes with any chance of success against almost 50 times their own number?"

Mr Sharpe-Neel said:



Waste paper means extra money for Ledbury and District Society. Helping society member Miss Iris Kirk pack the papers is society chairman Tony Watts.

1985 - the paper salvage scheme

1973 - the Society is born!



1978 - Heavy lorry turning into New Street

BY-PASS FIGHT CONTINUES

Campaigners keep up the pressure with 'road block'

Men, women and children crowded and noisied the pedestrian crossing in the town, leading on Monday morning in a bid to persuade lorry drivers and their employers not to force the issue through the town's narrow streets.



Campaigning for a by-pass

Birmingham Post 27/10/78
Moving house — by barrow

Birmingham Post Worcester Correspondent

Butcher's Row, a Tudor house at Ledbury, Herefordshire, is to be dismantled and moved to a new site — by wheelbarrow.

Conservationists are planning to pull down the historic tradesman's house and rebuild it 100 yards away near other half-timbered buildings in Church Lane.

Neither of the two sites is accessible to motor vehicles, so members of the Ledbury and District Society who will carry out the work have to transport every bit of the building by wheelbarrow and hand cart.

Workmen and volunteers are facing six months of hand-blistering work before the house, which has been given to the town by the two elderly sisters who own it, can be opened as a folk museum.

"We realise we have quite a job on our hands, and the work is to start in December," Mrs. Diana Merry, the society secretary, said yesterday.

"The house is only being moved about 100 yards as the crow flies, but it is nearer a quarter of a mile as the barrow wheels."

The society has set up a special trust to raise the £12,000 needed to do the work.



Project succeeded beyond our dreams

1979 - Opening the Butcher Row House

1978 - Moving the Butcher Row House

...uch parking, a multi-purpose leisure complex, a pitch and putt course, and public parkland — are arousing strong feelings in the town. Last week, DENNIS APPLBY spoke to deputy town mayor Sir Ken Davies, instigator of the idea. This week, opponents of the proposal take the platform.

Threat to medieval town

THE B.C.O. set up to preserve or restore the town's medieval buildings... The plan is to demolish the... The B.C.O. set up to preserve or restore the town's medieval buildings... The plan is to demolish the... The B.C.O. set up to preserve or restore the town's medieval buildings... The plan is to demolish the...

1993 - Campaigning against development in Ledbury Park

15/7/89
Ancient murals to 'cost a bomb'

1989 - Contribution to restoration of Painted Room murals

The final cost of restoring Ledbury's "hidden treasure", rare 16th century murals uncovered during renovation of the town council's historic offices, is likely to exceed £70,000.



1993 - Marking Ledbury's alleys

Many complaints voiced at public meeting 'Rates rise steeply while the services decline'

OVER 80 members of the Ledbury and District Council expressed a public opinion at St. Lawrence's Hall on Wednesday. The meeting, organised by the Ledbury and District Council, was held to discuss the... The meeting, organised by the Ledbury and District Council, was held to discuss the...

1977 - Campaigning about rate rises



Before

Making good progress

By DEBBIE DEAVES

A two-year restoration programme to transform a derelict Ledbury church into an attractive meeting hall has reached just over the halfway stage.

During the past 16 months, members of Ledbury and District Society have put in hundreds of hours of voluntary work to convert the Congregational church, which had stood empty for the last 25 years until July, 1984.

The building has been re-named Burgence Hall, which dates for the Middle Ages when Ledbury's main street was split into plots called burgages, and it is gradually being restored to its former glory.

Work has also been carried out by youngsters on a Youth Training Scheme, who laid the hall's concrete floor, and by local firms, who have helped in various ways, such as re-glazing windows.

But though a lot has been achieved in the past year, society chairman Mr Tony Watts says there is still more work to be done before the hall is opened to the public in July next year.

"It is going ahead very well and we are up on schedule but there is still a lot more to be done before next July."

Mr Tony Watts anticipates that the hall will also prove a good tourist attraction for the town.

He hopes visitors to the society's museum, which is next door to the hall, will also drop in to have a look at the hall and have a cup of

tea at the same time. "But the main idea is that the hall will be for the whole of Ledbury to use and not just the district society," said Mr Watts.

Those who would like to see the current progress of the hall will have a chance when the society holds a fund-raising jumble sale on December 7.



1985 - Burgence Hall refurbishment

'Welcome' signs going up

Ledbury and District Society have been invited to put up a new 'welcome' sign for the town. The sign will be made of stone and will be placed in the main street. The sign will be made of stone and will be placed in the main street. The sign will be made of stone and will be placed in the main street.

Supervisor Bill Jones (left) with Ledbury and District Society Trust members Eric Prince and John Cooper, Dean Ken Davison and signmaker Martin Weaver with one of the four signs.

1990 - Contributing to Ledbury's 'welcome' signs

Market House work starts

Work has begun to restore the historic Market House in the centre of Ledbury. The work will be completed by the end of the year. The work will be completed by the end of the year. The work will be completed by the end of the year.

Paul Yorke and Peter Harting of the Ledbury and District Civic Society hand over a cheque for £10,000 to town councillors Mary Cooper and Keith Francis.

14/6-06

by the Ledbury and District Civic Society, who contributed £10,000. This has required the short-term loss of a few parking spaces opposite the premises but also to ease traffic.

2006 - £10,000 contribution to restoration of the Market House

Papering over church cracks

LEDBURY and District Society Trust has delivered £70,000 to help preserve one of the town's most historic buildings - century-old St Andrew's church.

The church, having over 700 years of history, is a Grade I listed building. It is one of the finest examples of 15th-century Gothic architecture in the county. The church has a nave, choir, and tower. It is a fine example of the work of the architect, John Astell.

The church has a long and interesting history. It was founded in the 12th century and has since been the site of many important events. The church has a fine collection of stained glass windows and a fine collection of woodwork. The church is a fine example of the work of the architect, John Astell.

By ROBERT HALL

Missing from the church is the tower, which has been damaged and needs to be repaired. The tower is a fine example of the work of the architect, John Astell. The tower is a fine example of the work of the architect, John Astell.

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1998 - £10,000 contribution to restoration of church tower

Have your say on future of our historic buildings

The town of Ledbury has a rich heritage of historic buildings. The town of Ledbury has a rich heritage of historic buildings. The town of Ledbury has a rich heritage of historic buildings.

HERITAGE CENTRE, MARKET HOUSE, BUTCHER BOW HOUSE, TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, BREWING INSTITUTE, BURGAGE HALL.

Restrictive order is in place and will be completed.

2014 - Civic Society consults on asset transfer of heritage buildings from Herefordshire Council

*Ledbury and Distict Civic Society
50 Years looking after Ledbury.*