

# Archaeological assessment of Ledbury, Hereford and Worcester

Victoria Buteux

with contributions by Derek Hurst, Richard Morriss, Elizabeth Pearson and Paul Stamper

## Summary

*The historic town of Ledbury was surveyed during the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, a desk-based study of 64 smaller historic towns in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Archaeological and documentary evidence relating to the historic core of Ledbury was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.*

*Detailed evidence is provided on the character and layout of the settlement in the medieval and post-medieval periods. For each of these periods the available information is analysed and mapped in detail, and a model of the development of the town is proposed. In addition, the evidence for pre-urban occupation is considered, together with evidence of 19th century occupation. All archaeologically-relevant information has been recorded as part of the county Sites and Monuments Record. Specialist assessments of artefacts, ecofacts, standing buildings and documentary sources are included. A detailed archaeological research framework has been developed for Ledbury, which will inform future archaeological investigations as well as management decisions.*

*The historic core of Ledbury contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have moderate potential. In addition there is high potential for the recovery of artefact assemblages, and moderate potential for the recovery of ecofactual assemblages. It is possible that these assessments will require revision once more extensive archaeological evidence is available from fieldwork, and in particular if waterlogged deposits survive in the town. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence, and are judged to have high potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are fairly extensive and consequently there is judged to be moderate potential for further study.*

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Ledbury is located at NGR SO 711 376 in Malvern Hills District. The modern settlement of Ledbury comprises the historic core surrounded by modern housing development and some industrial development.

### 1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Ledbury lies on sloping ground on the eastern edge of the valley of the River Leadon at a height of between 60m and 85m OD. The soils, of the Bromyard association, are

characteristically argillic or stagnogleyic argillic brown earths (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984), overlying Devonian Raglan Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°N-0.4°W). They are likely to be neutral to slightly alkaline below the surface.

### 1.3 Chronological outline

The settlement of Ledbury developed around an Anglo-Saxon minster church founded in the early 8th century within the diocese of Hereford (Hillaby 1982, 11). Domesday Book records a priest, who held two and a half hides (Thorn and Thorn 1983). The town was situated on an important crossroads and probably acted as a marketing centre from its foundation. Ledbury was an important ecclesiastical centre in the medieval period, which is reflected in the size and grandeur of its Norman church and in the presence of a bishop's palace.

The exact date of the foundation of the new borough of Ledbury, created by the bishop of Hereford to the west of the original settlement, is not known. A market charter was granted in 1136 and the town seems to have developed rapidly in the 12th and 13th centuries. The "Red Book" of the bishop of Hereford written *c* 1288 gives a detailed picture of the medieval borough and indicates that by the late 13th century the basic topography of the town was established (Hillaby 1982). At this time the main trades and industries in the town were associated with the production of textiles, leather, metal, wood and foodstuffs. As would be expected considerable numbers of clerics were also recorded (Hillaby 1982, 36-38). The town seems to have stagnated in the 14th century probably due to the series of bad harvests and the effects of the Black Death. In the early 16th century the number of tenancies was still 25% less than in 1288 and in 1552 it was described as "a very poor town" (Hillaby 1982, 95).

As it had no monastic connections Ledbury was not greatly affected by the early stages of the reformation. However in 1547 the three chantries of the church were dissolved and their endowments used to re-found the Grammar School. In 1558 the borough came into the hands of the crown and in 1584 a new charter was granted by Elizabeth I (Hillaby 1982, 88). The period 1570-1620 was one of growing prosperity for Ledbury. This was based mainly on the textile and leather industries and resulted in the construction of many new buildings.

In 1629 Charles I sold the borough to the Corporation of London but it was bought back by a consortium of local landowners in 1635 (Hillaby 1982, 89). Ledbury was the scene of several skirmishes between the royalist and parliamentary forces during the Civil War. The town was not fortified, however, and emerged relatively unscathed (Hillaby 1982, 97). In 1664 Ledbury was the third largest town in Herefordshire and contemporary records show that textile industries predominated at this period (Hillaby 1982, 98). By the end of the 17th century, however, the town was once again in decline and by the 18th century it was only functioning as a market centre. Roads had always been important to the prosperity of Ledbury but heavy vehicles carrying agricultural produce caused a great deal of damage. As one response to this the Ledbury Turnpike Act was passed in 1721 causing great unrest in the countryside but not greatly improving ease of transportation (Hillaby 1982, 115).

From 1774 a number of canal schemes were considered to link Hereford through Ledbury with the River Severn and thus with Birmingham and the industrial Midlands. A canal was started in 1793 from Gloucester to Hereford and reached Ledbury in 1798 (Stanford 1980). A canal wharf was situated at the west end of New Street but the main area of warehousing was further to the south outside the town on the Ross Road. Ledbury was now the only market town in the county to enjoy a canal link with the outside world and while this provided opportunities for the town, its potential was not fully realised. The link to Hereford was not completed until the middle of the 19th century and it was almost immediately superseded by the opening of the Worcester to Hereford

railway in 1861. The Gloucester to Ledbury railway, built over the canal and wharf, was opened in 1885 (Hillaby 1982,116).

#### **1.4 Placename studies**

Ledbury, the "settlement on the River Leadon" (Coplestone-Crow 1989), is referred to as *Liedeberge* in 1086, *Ledburia*, *Ledebury* and *Lideberia* in the 12th century and *Ledebury* from the 13th century (Bannister 1916).

#### **1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data**

The documentary and topographical evidence relating to Ledbury has been best summarised by Hillaby (1982) although important work on the records of St Katherine's Hospital and the Red Book have been published by Bannister (1923; 1929), and on the 16th century accounts of St Katherine's by Morgan and Winnington-Ingram (1953). No synthesis of the archaeological data relating to the town has been published. The present assessment by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey was carried out in 1994. The text was revised in March 1995 to incorporate the results of fieldwork undertaken by the Survey (see section 1.7). No information published after December 1994 has been incorporated into this assessment.

#### **1.6 Cartographic sources**

Nineteenth century maps include the tithe map of 1841 (HFNS nd) and the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 map (*Herefordshire sheet XLI.4* (1887)) were used to aid in the identification of remains and the definition of components.

#### **1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys**

There have been no recorded excavations in Ledbury, but salvage recording was undertaken by the County Archaeological Service on Bridge Street where post-medieval horncores were recovered during the laying of a telephone cable (HWCM 8926; Brown 1989) and a watching brief was undertaken during alterations at 9 High Street in 1993 (HWCM 15995; Wichbold 1993). During restoration work in the church in the 19th century a 17th century font was discovered (HWCM 5704; Robinson 1988) and more recently building works at the Old Grammar School uncovered the course of the town brook and a number of artefacts, although there is no full report of this work (HWCM 21939). Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in October 1994. This identified remains, investigated and revised the extent of components, and recorded 18th and 19th century cellarage and modern developments in the urban area.

#### **1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel**

Survey fieldwork was undertaken by Victoria Buteux and Nigel Topping. Analysis and report writing were carried out by Victoria Buteux and the report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

## **2 Pre-urban evidence**

There is no archaeological evidence for pre-urban occupation on the site of the present town of Ledbury but cropmark and artefactual evidence suggest that the Leadon valley was occupied from the prehistoric period and that the valley was possibly quite densely occupied in the Iron Age and Roman periods. Prehistoric finds have been reported in the area (HWCM 21998, HWCM 22000) but their provenance is not secure. A Roman road runs along the western side of the valley (HWCM 5705). It has been suggested that the 8th century minster church was sited on a much older pagan cult site (Hillaby 1982, 13), but there is at present no archaeological evidence to confirm or deny this

supposition. By 1086 it would seem that a small village (HWCM 19886) had developed next to the minster precinct. The exact location or extent of this settlement is not known but it may have been centred on a funnel shaped market place in the area between Church Street and Church Lane (HWCM 19870).

### 3 Medieval archaeological evidence

#### 3.1 Medieval remains and buildings

There is no published information on the presence or otherwise of buried deposits of medieval date within Ledbury, although the course of the town brook, which ran from the churchyard and down Bridge Street, was discovered under the Old Grammar School during conservation work (HWCM 21939). A number of medieval buildings do survive in the town, however. The medieval church of St Michael and All Angels with its detached tower (HWCM 5704), the 14th century chapel of St Katherine's Hospital (HWCM 16632), the 15th century Master's House at St Katherine's (HWCM 16634) have been described and planned, and the sequence of their construction interpreted (RCHME 1932, 100-6). Other medieval buildings such as the Grammar School (HWCM 315), parts of a 15th century building at Upper Hall (HWCM 15269) and surviving fragments of secular buildings (HWCM 8658, HWCM 16584, HWCM 16587, HWCM 16657, HWCM 16664) have been recorded by RCHME (1932) but no detailed studies have been undertaken. Three pieces of medieval masonry are reset in the 17th and 18th century building of Lower Hall (HWCM 16605, RCHME 1932, 107).

#### 3.2 Medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of other documentary sources indicated the existence of 27 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

**Churchyard** (HWCM 19865). A minster church was founded at Ledbury in the early 8th century. A 12th century letter to the Bishop of Hereford suggests that the minster was the original see of the diocese of Hereford but there is no other evidence to corroborate this (Gelling 1992, 159-160). No evidence of the Anglo-Saxon church survives, although it was probably on the same site as the Norman church. The earliest surviving masonry in the present church dates to the late 11th or early 12th century and the detached tower is of 13th century date (HWCM 5704; RCHME 1932). In the medieval period the church was dedicated to St Peter and not St Michael (Hillaby 1982, 13-14). The extent of the medieval churchyard is not known and the boundary of this component has been drawn using the 1841 tithe map (HFNS nd).

**Portioners' houses** (HWCM 19866 and HWCM 19867). Ledbury was a portionary church with two portioners who held lands at Upper Hall (HWCM 19866) and Lower Hall (HWCM 19867) as well as in other areas within and without the borough (Hillaby 1982, 85). The first documentary reference to portioners is in 1201. The portioners were dignitaries of Hereford Cathedral and also held sinecure appointments at Ledbury (Robinson nd). Part of a 15th century building (HWCM 15269) survives at Upper Hall. The medieval extent of these components is not known and their boundaries have been drawn using the 1841 tithe map (HFNS, nd).

**Bishop's palace** (HWCM 12227). Ledbury was one of many manors owned by the bishops of Hereford. The palace at Ledbury was not often visited although it does seem to have become more popular in the middle of the 14th century (Tonkin

1976). It is generally assumed that the palace was situated at Upper Cross to the south of the church but it has been suggested that an earlier palace occupied the site of St Katherine's Hospital and that it was moved to Upper Cross in the early 13th century (Hillaby 1982, 23-24). However there is no documentary or archaeological evidence to support this view. In 1356 it was decided to rationalise episcopal residences and the house at Ledbury was abandoned (Tonkin 1976). In the mid-16th century Leland noted that there was a "faire mansion place for the bysshope at Ledbury" but that it was "all in ruynes" (Hillaby 1982, 80).

The extent of the grounds of the bishop's palace in the medieval period are not clear and this component has been defined using the 1841 tithe map and 1887 Ordnance Survey maps. The main buildings probably stood close to the Upper Cross but there would have been a large number of service and other buildings within the precinct. The palace was next to a large medieval deer park (HWCM 17311).

**Hospital** (HWCM 19873). The hospital of St Katherine was founded in 1232 by Bishop Hugh Foliot. The foundation was intended for the support of the poor and needy and was to be staffed by brethren and sisters leading a quasi-monastic life (Prescott 1992). From the records of the hospital it can be seen that the precinct contained a wide range of service buildings including barns, malt-houses, cider-houses, kitchens, stables, and a piggery (Hillaby 1982, 62). The only surviving buildings of the medieval hospital are the 14th century chapel and hall (HWCM 16632) and the 15th century Master's House (HWCM 16634).

**School** (HWCM 315). The grammar school was originally a chantry foundation and from the 15th century was housed in a building off Church Lane close to the entrance to the churchyard.

**Market places** (HWCM 19874 and HWCM 19875). A triangular-shaped market place (now High Street) was probably laid out as part of the planned borough in the 12th century. The northern and southern limits of the market were delimited by crosses (Lower Cross, HWCM 12124 and Upper Cross, HWCM 12123). The rectangular market area in Bye Street may have been a later addition to the town but it was certainly in existence by 1288 (Hillaby 1982, 49). By the later 13th century permanent shops were starting to replace the temporary stalls in both the market areas (tenement plot components HWCM 19880, HWCM 19881, and HWCM 19893). The Town Brook (HWCM 19869) ran across the northern end of the High Street market and down Bye Street acting as a drain for the market there.

**Street system** (HWCM 19868). Anglo-Saxon Ledbury lay on an important cross roads. The road running northwards from Gloucester linked Ledbury with its sister church at Bromyard, and the east-west route linked it with the ecclesiastical centres of Hereford, Malvern and Worcester (Robinson nd). The original exit out of the town to the east was via Church Street and what is now Green Lane. The 12th century planned borough was laid out on this crossroads, but at some time prior to 1232 New Street was pushed through the burgage plots to the west of the Southend to join the market place at Upper Cross (Hillaby 1982, 46). The Worcester Road was probably a minor road or track in the medieval period and was later referred to as Horse Lane (Hillaby 1982, 23). Knap Lane and Homend Crescent, previously Back Way, were probably part of the original planned borough as they provide access to the back of the tenement plots. The vestiges of a similar access road can also be seen to the west of the Homend.

**Tenement plots** (HWCM 19872, HWCM 19876, HWCM 19877, HWCM 19878, HWCM 19879, HWCM 19880, HWCM 19881, HWCM 19882, HWCM 19883, HWCM 19884, HWCM 19885, HWCM 19887, HWCM 19889, HWCM 19893, HWCM 21937, HWCM 21938). The first tenement plots to be laid out were

probably to the west and east of the Homend and the market place and to the west of the Southend opposite the medieval deer park (HWCM 19876, HWCM 19879, HWCM 19882, HWCM 19883 and the eastern portions of HWCM 19877 and HWCM 19878). It is possible that on the east of the town the burgage plots of the planned town were superimposed onto the land divisions of the earlier village and that HWCM 19887, HWCM 19889 and HWCM 19872 may be the vestiges of the original settlement around the church.

The tenement plots fronting Bye Street (HWCM 19884 and HWCM 19885) may belong to the first phase of town planning or may be a later addition. They were in existence by 1288 when this area of Ledbury contained 56 tenements (Hillaby 1983, 48-49). New Street was also developed by the late 13th century when it contained 35 tenements but, as the street name implies, this was a secondary development and the back plots of properties originally fronting the High Street and the Southend were used to make short tenement plots fronting New Street (HWCM 19877 and HWCM 19878).

It is not clear how far north the town extended in the medieval period. In 1288 there were 20 tenements in Southend, 26 in Middletown (High Street) and 78 in Homend (Hillaby 1982, 48-49). Hillaby suggests that at this date Homend stretched as far north as c No 78 Homend. The distinct break in the back boundary of the plots near this point suggests two stages of development, with HWCM 19882 and HWCM 19883 being developed before 1288, and HWCM 21937 and HWCM 21938 being laid out later in the medieval period. A later medieval date for the development of this most northerly area of the town is supported by the presence of a medieval building (HWCM 16664) in component HWCM 21938 (see section 6.4). Knape Lane and Back Way served as access lanes to the back of plots in this area.

By the 14th century the temporary stalls, mentioned in 1288 in the market places in the High Street and Bye Street, had become permanent shops (HWCM 19880, HWCM 19881, HWCM 19893). However, this permanent infilling of the market places may have started as early as the 13th century, since in 1288 five shambles or slaughterhouses are mentioned (Hillaby 1982, 47). These may have been the forerunners of Butcher Row (HWCM 19880).

**Open space** (HWCM 19871). On 18th and 19th century maps of the town this area to the east of the Anglo-Saxon market place is shown as an open space. Its function within the medieval town is not known but it may have had some connection with the portioner's manor at Lower Hall (HWCM 19867).

**Tannery** (HWCM 19862). A tannery is known to have existed at the junction of Bye Street and the Homend from the beginning of the 17th century but it has been suggested that it originated in the 13th century (Hillaby 1982, 135). Documentary evidence records the great importance of the tanning industry to Ledbury from the medieval period onwards.

### 3.3 Medieval urban form

**Definition and classification.** The medieval urban form (HWCM 19902) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of the tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the medieval urban form of Ledbury can be classified as a medium sized medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

**Survival.** Lack of fieldwork has meant that the survival of buried archaeological deposits dating to the medieval period has not been demonstrated in Ledbury. Contemporary buried deposits are likely to have survived next to, and within, the relatively high number of medieval buildings still standing within the town. The

continuous occupation of the Ledbury from at least the 12th century, and in some areas from the Anglo-Saxon period, suggests that stratified deposits are likely to have developed although these would have been damaged by post-medieval and modern development. The culverting of the Town Brook in the late 18th and early 19th century may have damaged deposits associated with it, but there is a possibility that waterlogged deposits survive along its course perhaps under the buildings between Church Lane and Church Street (see section 1.7).

The tenement plots, markets and street system of the medieval town can be readily identified within the modern townscape. However the boundaries of the medieval churchyard, portioners manors and bishops palace are harder to define.

## 4 Post-medieval archaeological evidence

### 4.1 Post-medieval remains and buildings

The cattle horncores uncovered at Bridge Street are probably of post-medieval date, but this is by no means certain (HWCM 8296; Brown 1989). A watching brief was carried out on the 16th century building at 9 High Street (HWCM 15955; Wichbold 1993) but there have been no recorded observations of buried deposits of definitely post-medieval date from the town. A 17th century font was discovered within the church in the last century (HWCM 5704; Robinson 1988).

The 17th century market building has been described and planned, and the sequence of construction interpreted (RCHME 1932, 106-7; HWCM 3219). There are twelve 16th century listed buildings, 54 17th century listed buildings and 72 18th century listed buildings within Ledbury. The majority of these have not been studied in any detail.

### 4.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 34 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

**Churchyard** (HWCM 19865). The post-medieval churchyard has been defined using the 1841 tithe map (HFNS nd)

**Chapel** (HWCM 19890). Meetings of non-conformist sects were not common in Ledbury but one congregation did meet behind 3 High Street from the early 17th century (Hillaby 1982, 96). The chapel now on the site (HWCM 16596) was built in the 19th century.

**Hospital** (HWCM 19891). St Katherine's Hospital survived the dissolution but in 1580 it was granted to Bishop John Storey. The dean and chapter of Hereford protested and the court of chancery restored the hospital to them (Prescott 1992). In 1569 St Katherine's was described as a "deserted and relinquished hospital" but later in that century the old buildings were restored and new buildings were built. These included a kitchen, privy, offices, stable, pigeon and saddle house as well as individual accommodation for the brethren and sisters. This accommodation may have been the dilapidated old buildings which were replaced at the beginning of the 19th century (Hillaby 1982, 63). From at least the 17th century there was encroachment on to the precinct of the Hospital (HWCM 19896, 19897).

**Workhouse** (HWCM 19858). The late 18th century and early 19th century workhouse was situated on Church Street. This was replaced by a new building on Orchard Lane in 1837 (HWCM 19848) and the old buildings were used as a school (Hillaby 1982, 134).

**Schools** (HWCM 315, HWCM 19892). The grammar school, originally a chantry foundation, was refounded in the middle of the 16th century and continued in the same premises until 1857 when it was moved to Oakland House in the Homend (Hillaby 1982, 90).

In 1708 a girls' school was founded by Elizabeth Hall in the Southend. The intention of the school was to teach all the domestic crafts and it continued at the same location into the 20th century (Hillaby 1982, 134-135).

**Market places** (HWCM 19875 and HWCM 19874). The medieval market places with their infilling of shops and houses continued with very little change into the post-medieval period. In 1616-17, however, Shop Row in the High Street (HWCM 19881) was demolished to make way for the timber-framed market hall (HWCM 3219). Butcher Row survived into the 19th century but the buildings were all finally demolished by 1840 (Hillaby 1982, 47). Some shops and houses in the market place at Bye Street survive to the present day although they are of 19th century date.

**Street system** (HWCM 21941). Isaac Taylor's map of 1754 shows a post-medieval street pattern which is essentially that recorded in the "Red Book" of 1288. By this time, however, Green Lane was no longer the main road out of Ledbury to the east but had been replaced by what is now the Worcester Road. Oatleys Road originally joined New Street to provide access to the canal side and was presumably built in the late 18th century.

**Tenement plots** (HWCM 19872, HWCM 19876, HWCM 19877, HWCM 19878, HWCM 19879, HWCM 19880, HWCM 19881, HWCM 19882, HWCM 19883, HWCM 19884, HWCM 19885, HWCM 19887, HWCM 19889, HWCM 19893, HWCM 19896, HWCM 19897, HWCM 19898, HWCM 19899, HWCM 19900, HWCM 19901, HWCM 21937, HWCM 21938). The decline in the fortunes of Ledbury at the end of the medieval period resulted in a less dense occupation of the medieval tenement plots and little expansion outside the bounds of the medieval town. The exception to this may be a possible extension of the town to the south in the 18th century (HWCM 19898) and encroachment on to the precinct of St Katherine's Hospital (HWCM 19896 and HWCM 19897). The buildings in this later area date to the 17th century which may suggest that the encroachment occurred during the period of Ledbury's increased prosperity at the end of the 17th century. Documentary evidence indicates that textile and leather manufacture were of particular importance in Ledbury at this period and these industries were presumably carried out in the back plots of the tenements.

In the later 16th century the medieval portioners estates were acquired by the Eltons, relatives of the last portioner of Lower Hall (HWCM 19900), and by the Skypes, relatives of the Bishop of Hereford (HWCM 19899). The site of the former bishop's palace was acquired by the Halls and later the Biddulphs (HWCM 19901). These families had considerable influence within the town throughout the post-medieval period (Hillaby 1982, 85-87).

**Tannery** (HWCM 19862). A tannery probably existed at the junction of Bye Street and the Homend from the medieval period. The tannery building dating to *c* 1600 was demolished in 1895 (Hillaby 1982, 44), and was no doubt one of many tanneries using the water of the Town Brook.

**Canal wharf** (HWCM 21940). At the very end of the 18th century Ledbury was linked to the Hereford to Gloucester canal and an area of yards and warehouses was laid out at the canal terminus on New Street. However the main wharf area seems to have been further to the south, near the Biddulph Arms.

**Open space** (HWCM 19871). Early 19th century maps of the town suggest show this area as an open space or garden. It is not clear when this was laid out, however, and the area may formally have been part of Lower Hall.

#### 4.3 Post-medieval urban form

**Definition and classification.** The post-medieval urban form (HWCM 19903) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the post-medieval urban form of Ledbury can be classified as a medium sized post-medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

**Survival.** Lack of fieldwork has meant that the survival of buried archaeological deposits dating to the post-medieval period has not been demonstrated in Ledbury. Buried deposits are likely to have survived next to, or within, the large number of standing post-medieval buildings within the town, however. The continuous occupation of Ledbury during this period suggests that stratified deposits are likely to have developed although these would have been damaged by 19th and 20th century development. The culverting of the Town Brook in the late 18th and early 19th century may have damaged deposits associated with it but there is a possibility that waterlogged deposits dating to the post-medieval period survive along its course. The tenement plots, markets and street system of the post-medieval town can be readily identified within the modern townscape and there is good survival of the post-medieval urban form to the present day.

### 5 Post-1800 archaeological evidence

The remit of the present study has not allowed for a detailed survey and assessment of the archaeological evidence relating to Ledbury in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out. Major archaeological remains have been identified, however, including the railway (HWCM 16608) and workhouse (HWCM 19848). Industrial sites dated to the 19th century include the gasworks (HWCM 16615), Vines Brewery (HWCM 19852), cider warehouses (HWCM 19859, HWCM 19860), brickworks (HWCM 19845, HWCM 19856), tanyards (HWCM 19861), and a ropewalk (HWCM 19853). There are 44 listed buildings dating to the 19th century within the study area.

### 6 Specialist assessments

#### 6.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Little artefactual evidence is available for Ledbury. The earliest datable artefact from the study area is a font of 17th century date (HWCM 5704) found in the 1800s. Carved stones, probably of medieval date, were built into a wall at Lower Hall (HWCM 16605). A collection of horn cores probably of post-medieval date (HWCM 8926) may be indicative of the local manufacture of horn objects or leather.

There are other finds reported from the Ledbury area but their provenance is not secure. These are a Bronze Age palstave (HWCM 22000), a prehistoric spindlewhorl (HWCM 21998), medieval and post-medieval coins and tokens (HWCM 21999) and a complete late medieval jug from the River Leadon (HWCM 22001).

#### 6.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

As there has been little archaeological fieldwork in Ledbury to date, the opportunity to sample for environmental remains has been rare. The only environmental material studied so far includes animal bone and pollen assemblages.

**Animal bone.** A large number of cattle horn cores were discovered during salvage recording at Bridge Street (HWCM 8926; Brown 1989). They are tentatively dated to the post-medieval period and are interpreted as a lining of a drainage channel, possibly originating from tanning or horn working waste. Pollen was studied from organic deposits sealed under a layer of silt and alluvium at New Mills, to the west of the study area (Greig nd).

### 6.3 Assessment of documentary sources P Stamper

From the late Middle Ages onwards Ledbury is relatively well documented, the court rolls being an especially valuable survival. Principal groups of primary sources are listed in section 9. The main secondary sources consulted during the archaeological assessment include Hillaby (1982), Bannister (1923), and Morgan and Winnington-Graham (1953). Secondary sources not consulted during the archaeological assessment include Parr (1884) and an early 19th century guidebook (Anon 1831).

### 6.4 Assessment of buildings R Morriss

Ledbury's pre-19th century buildings are largely positioned on either side of the main axis of the town, from The Homend in the north to the Southend in the south. Others line the principal routeway crossing this axis to the south of the widened out market place, made up of New Street to the west and Worcester Road to the east. In addition, there are the buildings lining the famously picturesque Church Lane leading eastwards off the northern end of the market place to the medieval parish church.

A considerable number of these historic buildings are timber-framed survivals from the mid-17th century or before, though many have been rendered or brick clad. Surviving medieval buildings are mainly concentrated on Church Lane, including three that date to the 15th century (the Town Council Offices HWCM 16584; the Prince of Wales Inn HWCM 16587; and the Old Grammar School HWCM 315). One notable, and remarkable, exception, is St Katharine's Hospital complex situated just west of the High Street. This includes a mid-14th century stone structure (HWCM 16632) and a timber-framed late-15th century hall house, radically rebuilt, known as the Master's House (HWCM 16634). Apart from its position almost in the centre of the town, which might imply a lack of demand on land at that date, or considerable wealth in the foundation, little related to the development of Ledbury can be deduced from the survival of St Katherine's. The survival of a cruck frame in the Homend, at No. 233-235 (HWCM 16664) might suggest that the medieval town was built up as far as this spot and would confirm the cartographic evidence (see section 3.2).

Most of the other timber framed buildings date from the end of the 16th century to the middle of the 17th, and their size and quality of framing demonstrates that the town was prospering at this period. This is reflected in the construction of a grand new Market Hall in about 1633 (HWCM 3219). Indeed, it seems that there was sufficient wealth available to virtually rebuild the centre of the town. Most of these new buildings were, on the High Street and the southern end of The Homend especially, quite wide and generally of three or more storeys. Close-studding generally with one or two mid-rails, a deliberately expensive use of timber, was popular, as were shallow jetties to the upper floors and multi-gabled roof lines.

The size and grandeur of houses, perhaps predictably, declines away from the centre of the town. It seems clear from the survival spread, however, that the early 17th century town extended most of the way along The Homend, and at least 150-200m along New Street, Bye Street, Worcester Road and The Southend.

Although there were many new buildings added in the 18th century, the survival of many large timber-framed houses beneath render or behind brick facades supports the documentary evidence that the town was not as prosperous in the 18th century as it had

been in the 17th century. Few of the Georgian brick buildings are of particularly high status. There seems to have been a very gradual process of replacing old buildings with new, coupled with a more common move to clad the old with the guise of the new. This gradual change was an organic one and few areas of the town seem to have had their social characteristics altered. There are very few examples of large scale development, although there were a few lower middle-class short terraces erected in the Homend. The largest of these is St Katharine's Terrace (nos. 96-116 [even]; HWCM 16692 and HWCM 16693), a continuous development of late 18th century three and two storey terraces houses on the west side (not two early 19th century separate terraces as in the listing). Development after the early 19th century appears to have slowed considerably.

The town has retained many of its rear courts and several have been well restored, particularly off The Homend. The buildings are mainly of timber-frame or brick. Survival of rear buildings off the High Street is not as good, although in any case the existence of St Katharine's Hospital would undoubtedly have affected the urban plan in this area from the mid-14th century or even earlier.

**Survey and analysis.** Many buildings in Ledbury have been surveyed and analysed in some degree but there appears to have been no synthetic overview.

**Assessment of the listing details.** The list dates to 1976 but in general it seems to be comprehensive and accurate although the descriptions are generally a little too brief.

## 7 Archaeological research framework

### 7.1 Model of urban development

A model of the medieval and post-medieval town of Ledbury has been produced which is predictive and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. This model has both chronological and spatial (landuse) dimensions (see sections 2 to 5) and is based on an analysis of documentary, cartographic and archaeological sources. The model is derived from the current academic understanding of urban development in Britain, and forms one element of a developing regional research framework. The model is provisional and will be subject to confirmation or revision in the future as new information becomes available, or new studies lead to changing understandings of towns in the region.

### 7.2 Chronological framework

Documentary evidence suggests that urban occupation commenced in the 12th century on the site of a pre-conquest and Norman settlement possibly situated next to the church and the cross roads and that the settlement was continuously occupied until the present. Evidence from documents and standing buildings suggests that there was a period of economic decline in the 14th century followed by a period of prosperity in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The town declined again in the 18th and 19th centuries. The broad outlines of this chronological framework are provisional and require testing through archaeological investigation. Of particular interest would be information on the date and extent of the pre-Conquest settlement, the date of the construction of the bishops palace and the chronology of the development of the different tenement plot components of the town.

### 7.3 Urban landuse

The medieval and post-medieval components identified here (sections 3.2 and 4.2) have been mapped and constitute a model of urban landuse for each period. These landuse models are partial and provisional and capable of testing through archaeological

investigation. None of the medieval or post-medieval urban components of Ledbury have been archaeologically investigated and there is potential for recovering evidence relating to the nature and extent of occupation in the various parts of the town and how this changes over time. Of particular interest would be the location of documented and undocumented industries, the effect of the economic decline in the 14th century on the extent and intensity of occupation and any evidence of the Anglo-Saxon minster church.

#### 7.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

No archaeological information is available on the depth of archaeological deposits in Ledbury but the continuous occupation of the site from at least the 12th century, and possibly much earlier, means that stratified deposits are likely to have developed. The continued development of Ledbury, particularly in this century, means that many of these deposits will have been damaged or destroyed. Any surviving deposits would, therefore, be particularly important. Datable artefactual and ecofactual assemblages from stratified deposits would provide a great deal of information on the town itself and may help to improve understanding of Ledbury's changing significance within the region. Any deposits along the Town Brook are likely to be waterlogged and therefore would have high potential for artefactual and environmental studies.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in October 1994. The extent of 18th and 19th century cellarage was mapped, together with the extent of 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there was extensive observable cellarage along the main streets. It is likely that evidence for more extensive cellarage has been obscured by modern refurbishment of frontages and pavements. There was a moderate amount of modern re-development within the historic core with the exception of the Bye Street area which has been heavily redeveloped in this century.

#### 7.5 Potential for artefactual studies J D Hurst

No archaeological excavation has been undertaken in Ledbury and the extent of surviving artefactual evidence in buried deposits cannot yet be assessed. It is likely, however that waterlogging occurs in the vicinity of the Town Brook, and so artefactual evidence may be exceptionally well preserved in certain parts of the town. It is also likely that contexts that have not been sampled to date, for instance fishponds associated with Upper hall (HWCM 11928), could be of significance for the survival of artefactual evidence, as they may also include waterlogged finds.

The site of the modern town has been continuously occupied since the foundation of the minster in the 8th century, and this is rare in the region. The possibility of continuous occupation, coupled with waterlogged deposits in part of the town, has produced a situation where artefactual survival may be exceptional. However, continuity of settlement into the modern period means that earlier deposits may be very disturbed in some areas.

**Period discussion.** So few artefacts have so far been discovered in Ledbury that assessment of the range of periods represented and their significance cannot be undertaken. As a result the extent and character of the medieval and post-medieval town is largely unknown.

**Comparison with documentary evidence.** Documentary evidence suggests a large number of crafts or industries were based in Ledbury by the 13th century. These included weaving, fulling, coopering, and metalworking (Hillaby 1970). The presence of goldsmiths and furriers (*pelliparius*) gives some indication of the wealth of the town in this period (D Holt pers comm). Building accounts for St Katherine's Hospital in the later 16th century record the ordering of *bricke* from Hanley Castle on the east side of the Malverns, and provide other information about the sources of building materials at this

time (Morgan 1954). In the post-medieval period there was evidence of textile working, rope making and tanning. The horn cores discovered at HWCM 8926 may be a by-product of the later industry.

#### **7.6 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson**

Only a limited range of biological material has been recovered, and there is little indication as yet of the full potential for environmental archaeological research in Ledbury. As the soils are seasonally waterlogged, some organic material may be preserved by waterlogging, although probably not extensively. In particular, large dumps of organic material in, for example, pits or ditches near the Town Brook may have survived. The non-acid conditions suggests that animal bone and molluscs may survive well.

Environmental remains providing information relating to both the agricultural and industrial occupation of the town may be recovered from areas identified by documentary evidence, eg tenement plots, service buildings to the hospital (barns, malt-houses, cider houses, kitchens, stables and a piggery), slaughter houses and tanneries. The find of horn cores on Bridge Street (HWCM 8296) may be evidence for tanning. Animal bone waste from this process is particularly important as it not only indicates where tanning may be taking place, but the species of animals used for their skins. Tanning needs a great deal of water. The only recorded tannery was situated on the Town Brook at the top of Bye Street and this stream also ran down Bridge Street. The textile industries were probably also situated along the town brook, and there is the potential for the remains of dye plants used in the textile industry to be found in waterlogged organic deposits in this environment. Evidence of this nature has previously been recovered from medieval waterlogged dump deposits along the Thames in the City of London (Pearson 1990) and in other cities, and woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) has occasionally been found.

As few environmental remains have been recovered from Ledbury, any environmental material would be of interest. This could provide information on diet, living conditions and agricultural or industrial economy. Any future excavations should include a policy of sampling and wet-sieving deposits in order to recover plant, insect, molluscs and small animal remains in conjunction with hand-collection of larger items. Where appropriate, specialist sampling for soil and pollen analysis may be required.

#### **7.7 Potential for the study of standing buildings R Morriss**

Ledbury has more than enough historic buildings to warrant an extensive architectural survey. This should lead on to intensive archaeological surveys of a number of buildings considered to be of sufficient historical importance, as well as to a synthetic study of the town's architectural development.

#### **7.8 Summary of research potential**

The historic core of Ledbury contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have moderate potential. In addition there is high potential for the recovery of artefact assemblages, and moderate potential for the recovery of ecofactual assemblages. It is possible that these assessments will require revision once more extensive archaeological evidence is available from fieldwork, and in particular if waterlogged deposits are survive in the town. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence, and are judged to have high potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources fairly extensive and consequently there is judged to be moderate potential for further study.

## 8 Management framework

### 8.1 Urban archaeological area

The mapped extent of the medieval and post-medieval urban forms defined above indicated the extent of the urban area (Ledbury Urban Archaeological Area). The significance of the urban archaeological area is assessed below.

### 8.2 Existing protection measures

The different parts of the urban area are afforded different measures of protection through legislation and the planning process. Directly relevant measures are outlined below.

**Scheduled ancient monument.** There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument in Ledbury, the Market House (Here and Worc no 6). It is possible that following the current Monument Protection Programme English Heritage may modify the scheduled area or add other monuments in Ledbury to the schedule.

**Listed buildings.** There are a total of 107 buildings and structures listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Buildings of special architectural or historic interest should receive very special attention. Such buildings are limited in their number and there is a need to protect and preserve them. The presumption when considering applications to demolish or alter is in favour of preservation. This presumption is also likely to preserve archaeological remains beneath and immediately around such buildings from development. It is important that the architectural and archaeological interests are considered together.

The alteration of listed buildings requires the greatest skill and care to avoid damage to historic structures. Specialist architectural advice is given by the County Conservation Architect or through the District's own conservation officer where that District Council has their own specialist staff.

**Conservation area.** A Conservation Area has been defined which partially encompasses the archaeological area (Malvern Hills District Local Plan. Deposit Draft (1994)).

### 8.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Ledbury contains earthworks and buried remains relating to medieval and post-medieval occupation, associated with contemporary buildings. The buried remains may vary in complexity and depth, and will contain significant archaeological information. It is desirable that any proposed development within the urban area that has a potential impact on earthworks or buried remains should be assessed by the appropriate archaeological body.

The course of action recommended will depend upon the nature of the development and current planning legislation and frameworks. The archaeological response will be based on both the archaeological information summarised in this document and any subsequent archaeological information recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record.

## 9 Principal groups of primary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(HRO: Hereford Record Office)

HRO AF 4	Court rolls for the borough and for Ledbury Foreign manor. They survive for most years 1625-1934.
HRO AM 33	Court rolls including Ledbury Foreign manor 1475-6, 1554-5. Also a computus roll for the borough and Ledbury Foreign manor 1496-7
HRO 1/41-3	Glebe terriers, 1601, 1607
HRO B 38	Skippe family deeds, mid-16th to 18th centuries. Other collections with Ledbury material include G 87 (manor of Park, including some medieval material), L 84, and M 84
HRO B38	Court roll for 1535
HRO 92	Ledbury 1788
HRO HD	Tithe map (1841) and apportionment (1842)

## 10 References

- Anon 1831 *The Ledbury guide: containing an historical and topographical account of the town [etc]*
- Bannister, A T, 1916 *The place-names of Herefordshire*
- Bannister, A T, 1918 The hospital of St Katherine at Ledbury, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **20**, 62-70
- Bannister, A T, 1923 A descriptive catalogue of manuscripts dealing with St Katherine's, Ledbury, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **24**, 231-253
- Bannister, A T, 1929 A transcript of "The Red Book", a detailed account of the Hereford bishopric estates in the thirteenth century, *Camden Miscellany*, **15**
- Beresford, M, and Finberg, H, 1973 *English medieval boroughs: a handlist*
- Brown, D, 1989 Bridge Street, HWCM 8926, *West Midlands Archaeol*, **32**, 39-40
- Coplestone-Crow, B, 1989 *Herefordshire place-names*, BAR British Series, **214**
- English Heritage 1992 *Monument evaluation manual, part 4: urban areas*, **2**
- Gelling, M, 1992 *The west Midlands in the early middle ages*, Leicester
- Greig, J R A, nd *Pollen report from New Mills, Ledbury*, unpublished typescript
- HFNS nd *Herefordshire field-name survey: Ledbury Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*
- Hillaby, J G, 1970 The boroughs of the bishop of Hereford in the late 13th century with particular reference to Ledbury, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **40**, 10-35
- Hillaby, J G, 1982 *The book of Ledbury: an essay in interpretation*, Buckingham
- Jackson, J, 1843 The architecture of Ledbury Church, *J Brit Archaeol Assoc*, **38**, 9-16
- King, J W, 1991 The mills of Ledbury, *Herefordshire Archaeol Newsletter*, **56**, 14-20
- Marshall, G, 1943 The detached church towers of Herefordshire, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **31**, 132-140

- Morgan, F C, and Winnington-Ingram, A J, 1953 The accounts of St Katherine's Hospital, Ledbury, 1584-1595, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **34**, 88-132
- Noble, F, 1964 Medieval boroughs of west Herefordshire, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **38**, 62-70
- Parr, F, 1884 *Historical notes of old Ledbury*
- Pearson, E, 1990 *The plant remains from medieval waterfront dumps in the City of London*, unpublished typescript, Museum of London Archaeology Service
- Prescott, E, 1992 *The English medieval hospital 1050-1640*
- Ragg, J M, Beard, G R, George, H, Heaven, F W, Hollis, J M, Jones, R J A, Palmer, R C, Reeve, M J, Robson, J D, and Whitfield, W A D, 1984 *Soils and their use in midland and western England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales, **12**
- RCHME 1932 *An inventory of the historical monuments in Herefordshire*, **2**
- Robinson, S, 1923 The forest and woodland areas of Herefordshire, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **24**, 193-220
- Robinson, S F G, 1988 The fonts at Ledbury, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **46**, 87-88
- Robinson, S F G, nd *A short history of the parish of Ledbury, Herefordshire*, unpublished typescript (copy in HWCC SMR parish file)
- Rowley, T, 1986 *The landscape of the Welsh Marches*
- Stanford, S C, 1980 *The archaeology of the Welsh Marches*
- Taylor, I, 1754 *New map of the County of Hereford* (reproduced in Hillaby 1982)
- Thorn, F, and Thorn, C (eds), 1983 *Domesday Book: Herefordshire*, Chichester
- Tonkin, J W, 1976 The palaces of the bishops of Hereford, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **42**, 53-63
- Vince, A G, 1984 *The medieval ceramic industry of the Severn Valley*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton
- Watkins, A, 1917 Herefordshire wayside and town crosses, *Trans Woolhope Natur Fld Club*, **19**, 249-260
- Wichbold, D, 1993 *Watching brief at 9 High Street, Ledbury (HWCM 15995)*, HWCC County Archaeology Service internal report

## 11 Mapping

The illustrations for this report comprise CAD plots of the urban components for each period and a location plot of archaeological remains combined with OS digital map data (1995) at 1:5000. These plots are current at the date of the completion of this report (March 1995). After this date new information will be held by the Hereford and Worcester County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

- \* Historic buildings (listed and other recorded buildings) and urban area
- \* Archaeological remains and urban area
- \* Medieval urban form and components
- \* Post-medieval urban form and components
- \* Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments