

## LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Report from the October Fair Working Party  
Held at 10am on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016  
in the Town Council Offices

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**Present:** Cllrs M Eager, P Bettington, K Francis & N Morris  
meeting with Ashley Rogers.

**Apologies:** Cllr Bob Barnes

The meeting was recorded and written up by Cllr M Eager.

This was a meeting to sound out a proposal by the Roger's family to hold what was thought according to the Charter a Mop Fair in Ledbury's streets sometime during March.

The proposal is to hold a two-day fair 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in March (setting up on Sunday and then running on Monday & Tuesday) in the same vein as the October Fair with similar number and type of rides and food outlets occupying the same street and car park space.

The translated charter (enclosed) states that the other fair or mop be held at the beginning of the Feast of St Barnabas second Tuesday in October which we hold at present.

After discussion and much deliberation, it was considered that the proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of March would be a suitable date, to bring people into Town to what is normally a quiet month.

However, during the meeting it was established that the Philip & James Apostles Feast was held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> this coincides with the Hereford May Fair.

There was discussion and deliberation about weather, trader's opinion, road closures, marshalling, the need for another fair, and/or the need for more events in the town centre at this time of year.

Other scenarios such as different day possibly a Saturday were quickly dismissed.

When asked Ashley Rodgers informed those present that if the Council objected to a fair being held in March then he would by right of the Mop Fair Charter ask for it to be held on the first Tuesday in May (Bank Holiday weekend).

There are no recommendations from this meeting and the Roger's proposal using the information as detailed above is to go to the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> March.

## **Further Information for Town Councillors**

### The origins of Mop (Hiring) Fairs held in England

Farm workers, labourers, servants and some craftsmen would work for their employer from October to October. At the end of the employment they would attend the mop fair dressed in their Sunday best clothes and carrying an item signifying their trade. A servant with no particular skills would carry a mop head. The 'tassle' worn on their lapel was the emblem of the employee's trade and was known as a 'mop' hence the term "mop fair". Hiring fairs were also known as statute fairs (or statutes) because an Act of Parliament of 1677 endorsed the yearly bonds made between masters and servants at them.

Employers would move amongst them discussing experience and terms, and once agreement was reached the employer would give the employee a small token of money and the employee would remove the item signifying their trade and wear bright ribbons to indicate they had been hired. They would then spend the token amongst the stalls set up at the fair which would be selling food and drink and offering games to play.

Michaelmas Day is celebrated on 29 September but mop fairs were tied to the seasons and the harvest, not the calendar. When the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1752 and eleven days dropped from that year, events associated with the end of the harvest moved eleven days later to 10 October. This date is known as "Old Michaelmas Day" and since 1752 has been the date mop fairs take place.

In the case of Ledbury the October Fair held on the second Tuesday in October is a Mop Fair and has nothing to do with the charter.

Any fair held in Ledbury under the terms of the charter should be held under the Feast of the Apostles Philip & James on or around May 3<sup>rd</sup> and/or the Feast of St Barnabas on or around June 11<sup>th</sup>.

The Rogers family are requesting to hold a fair in March, and again it should be pointed out that this proposed date and their current booking in October has nothing to do with the charter, and delving into the history of Ledbury it is unclear when either of the 'charter fairs' ceased to operate.

Finally, the question of whether the substantial period of time since any Charter Fair was held in Ledbury now gives the Rogers family a 'carte blanche' right to hold a fair.

**Cllr Martin Eager**