|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20 |  | LEDBURY  St. Michael’s Church \*\*\*\*  ‘Floating’ Norman chancel, Decorated baptistery chapel  Ledbury is an attractive town, set against a limb of the Malvern hills and named for the River Leadon. Within the town, St Michael’s church is unobtrusive, shut off from the hubbub of the high street by a rabbit-warren of tiny lanes.  The steeple is detached from the church to the North. It dates from the early 13th C., its spire replaced in the eighteenth by a Worcester architect, Nathaniel Wilkinson. Ledbury is thus a church of all periods. The west front is basically Norman, with turrets and zig-zag carvings round the doorway. Inside, the eye is drawn to the piers of the 12th-century chancel arcades, holding up rough-hewn limestone walls with port-hole windows at the upper level.  Round the chancel, the Gothic masons conduct a courtly dance. The aisles are wide, grand, and airy, embracing the chancel with majestic windows of the “decorated” period that dominate the whole interior. Most are filled with Victorian and later stained glass. Even finer windows light the North chancel chapel, designed as a chapterhouse in 1330 and later used as a baptistry. The windows are splendid accumulations of quatrefoils, trefoils and ballflower, enlivening every shaft. Only St Peter and St. Paul, Leominster, can compete with this richness. |

Adapted from Simon Jenkins, *England’s Thousand Best Churches* (Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1999; pubd with minor revisions, Penguin Books, 2000), p. 270