

## RIBBESFORD

### Play Piggy, Play

It is a surprise to come upon St Leonard's, tucked away down a tree lined avenue, but there is much of interest here – a timbered bell cote, with one of its three bells possibly 13th century, and if so the oldest in Worcestershire, and more carvings. These are now on the pulpit, though formerly they were part of a 15th century rood screen; a pig playing the bagpipes and a fox preaching to geese. The fox, clad in a cloak, is said to represent one of the many begging Friars who were so disliked by local Priests.

St Leonard, who died about 559 AD and patron saint of prisoners, lived at one time as a hermit, but later went on to found a monastery at Noblac in France.

To the side of the church, among trees, lies the handsome turreted Ribbesford House, built in 1820 on the site of a fortified manor complete with moat and drawbridge (now gone). It is a private house and cannot be visited, but it is a reminder that until the 16th century Ribbesford used to be more important than Bewdley.

