

# All Around Leominster – Photos from the 1980s by Christopher Preece

3rd to 31st May 2025 Mon-Sat 10am-4pm

The Stables Gallery, Leominster Information Centre, Corn Square, Leominster HR6 8YP

Thirty-Three Printed Photos & Fifty-Eight Digital Slideshow Photos

## 1) Man with a Bag - 1985

I don't remember who this is. If anyone knows who it is please leave a comment in the comments book. What I like about this photo is the slight awkwardness that is obvious in him, which I suppose is fair enough, it's not that often that a young lad asks you if they can take a photo of you when you are just going about your business. But no hint of a smile.

I can hazard a guess that it's taken in the lane that runs between the South Street roundabout and the Sydonia playing fields, now called Sydonia Park. What interests me now, other than his clothing, is what is in his bag? There appears to be something rolled up in newspaper.

## 2) Butcher - 1984

I took a lot of photos of the old boy with the stick, he could often be found opposite this butcher's shop on a bench outside the folk museum. I'm not sure if the butcher in this photo is Sam Bird, I remember him as having very little hair. This shop was on the corner of Etnam Street and School Lane and is now a Chinese Takeaway.

## 3) EE Downes - 1984

I don't remember this operating as a garage and filling station in South Street. However, you can still just about make out the advertising signs on the wall today. If anyone knows anything about EE Downes, please leave a comment in the comments book.

## 4) Bus Station - 1987

A photo of my brother Alan and his girlfriend at the time, Rachel. Taken in Leominster's old bus station. Typical 1980s haircuts and clothing, look at Rachel's earrings. With the new 'Freezer Centre' in the background you could get 18 portions of dairy cream gateaux for £2.59.

## 5) Playground - 1985

This is the playground that is still located in The Grange, Leominster. The triangular apparatus in the background was known locally as the 'witches hat'. I took this photograph from the top of the steps of the 'big slide'. Note the sheepskin 'car coat' which was very fashionable at the time. Despite the ice on the ground, the young boy is enjoying the roundabout.

## 6) Uncle Walter - 1986

This photo was taken inside my uncle's office/store room/shop at his filling station which was located on Worcester road, near the railway station. Uncle Walter is seen here smoking his pipe despite the nearby paraffin heater, oil stores, and a gas heater. He built the filling station in the early 1950s, some people questioned his wisdom, but he was adamant that the 'cars will come'. Indeed, they did.

### **7) Petrol Station - 1986**

This photo shows my Uncle Walter with his son, my cousin, Richard, who worked at the filling station. They worked seven days a week from 7.00am to 10.00pm, only closing on a Sunday afternoon.

### **8) Boys - 1981**

This is one of the earliest photographs from my collection of 35mm black and white films, this is film number one. It was taken in the front room of my parent's home, the 'best room', as opposed to the back room that we lived in. The 'boys' are Buster Newman, Mark Watkins, Martin Hunt, and my brother Alan. Note Mark's Harrington jacket, scarf and badges.

### **9) Corn Square - 1984**

This bench provided a popular spot for young people to meet in the town square. This wasn't a posed shot, but the people in the picture were aware that I was taking the photo.

### **10) Three Men and a Dog - 1985**

This bench is in the Grange in Leominster. This site marks the outer edge of the Priory precinct. I noticed that one of the men was wearing his slippers which I thought was interesting.

### **11) The Dingle - 1984**

This photo shows Leominster's first adventure playground, built in the 1970s. This photograph was taken in 1984. The playground was set on wasteland that existed between Sandpits Road and Ryelands Road in an area we called The Dingle.

The climbing frame in this photo was something to be in awe of, and thankfully these kids were happy to make this composition work as I shot against the sun so that their faces can't be seen. They will know who they are and I can recognise a couple of faces in the photo. There was an old tractor to play on as well as some other metal apparatus and concrete sewer pipes, buried in the ground for children to crawl through.

### **12) Binoculars - 1983**

This was taken in a derelict building at Cockcroft Farm that was subsequently demolished and made way for three large houses built on a hill on the South side of Leominster. The abandoned farm was a popular 'playground' for local children. These three lads are stood on an abandoned cooker.

### **13) Cockcroft Farm - 1983**

The farm stood high on the hill above the town with commanding views of surrounding agricultural land including Arrow Valley water meadows, woodlands on Brierly Hill and of course the Black Mountains and Radnorshire Forest in the far distance.

The farm was left unoccupied for a number of years so became a playground for young people and young adults who broke in each time it was boarded up.

### **14) Girls - 1984**

This group of girls were also using the abandoned farm buildings at Cockcroft farm as a place to hang out. If you recognise any faces, please let me know in the comments book.

#### **15) Air Gun - 1983**

The air gun was pointed at me in good humour, I don't think he was intending to fire it! If you recognise these boys, please let me know in the comments book.

#### **16) Café - 1985**

This café was at the top of West Street, although I don't have any recollection of it. I can remember wandering around Leominster on freezing cold nights trying to get photos of the local night life. Does anyone know who the woman in the window is? Please let me know in the comments book.

#### **17) Dimarco's - 1985**

This fish and chip shop is still operating at the bottom of Bargates. If you know who the person in the window is please let me know in the comments book.

#### **18) Bus Stop - 1984**

There is still a bus stop outside the Moravian Church in South Street, although this concrete one was replaced long ago.

The smashed window pane made a perfect aperture to take a photo through. I was lucky that the old boy must have seen me and looked across the road as he entered the frame. If you look closely, you can see that he has a cigarette finely balanced in his mouth. I'm sure someone must know who he was, I think that he may have been one of the congregation of the Moravian Church.

#### **19) Preecer - 1990**

This shop was in Corn Street, it is currently an antique and craft shop. Pictured is Chris Preece, my namesake.

#### **20) Livestock Market - 1983**

The livestock market site on Westbury Street is now a Co-op and bus station. The market operated every Friday bringing the farming community into town.

#### **21) Conkers - 1984**

Taken on the short footway linking Ryelands Road and Sandpitts via the Adventure Playground (known as the 'Dingle'). If you think you recognise these children, let me know in the comments book.

#### **22) Newman House - 1984**

This building is largely unchanged today, halfway up Ryeland's Road. I think the man in the window spotted me as I was taking this shot. Do you know who he is?

### **23) Buttercross - 1985**

This was once the site of the town's market hall built in 1633 and carefully dismantled and re-erected in 1859 in The Grange. A Town Hall was then built on this site, with a useful large covered market behind. The Victorian Town Hall was demolished in the 1970's, the covered market survived as a builder's merchants, Keebles, until that too was demolished. The site was left empty, as in this photo until work started on today's Buttercross building that included a first floor Library, bank and shops. If you recognise the boys in this picture please let me know in the comments book.

### **24) Cursneh Hill - 1985**

Tobogganing down Cursneh Hill on a snowy Sunday. Are you in this picture – if you recognise anyone let me know in the comments book.

### **25) Infant School - 1985**

Built in the 1950's to a modern design, this school was located at the end of George Street. Depending on your age, you will know this as either the infant, or junior school, as it changed roles over the years. Sadly, this building was demolished a few years ago to make way for a new combined primary school on the adjacent site.

### **26) Upper School, South Street - 1984**

This building was known as the tower block on the South Street site of the Minster School. On the same site now sits the town's secondary school, the Earl Mortimer College.

### **27) Lower School, Green Lane - 1986**

This picture shows a typical walkway between the re-purposed military buildings that functioned as classrooms. The classrooms were heated by cylindrical coke-burners, that glowed red hot. Many ex-pupils of the school may remember being sent to stand 'on the poles' along these walkways as punishment for various misdemeanours. This site is now a housing estate.

### **28) Mortimer Street - 1984**

This picture was taken at the top of the street, where you would usually get a good view across Leominster toward Eaton Hill, obscured on this foggy morning.

### **29) Gateway Lane - 1985**

This lane, which connects South Street with Aldermans Meadow, doesn't actually have any gates, but it does have two barriers to stop motor vehicles passing through.

### **30) Holland Road - 1984**

The houses on Holland Road were originally pre-fabricated. I don't know if the people in the picture are related to each other, if you know their names, please let us know in the comment book. Note the can of Shandy Bass on the wall.

### **31) Number 20 - 1984**

This house is either on Mortimer or Croft Street – do you know where it is and who this couple are? Let me know in the comments book if you have any ideas. I love the flower baskets made out of old tyres.

### **32) Skipping, Croft Street - 1985**

I took this picture to capture the traditional street games, however it is now the old cars that I enjoy looking back on.

### **33) Churchill Avenue - 1985**

My grandmother lived near here, first in South Street and then later on George Street, so this area was very familiar to me. These council houses struck me as being well made between the wars, with their metal framed windows that probably warped over the years.

# All Around Leominster - Photos from the 1980s

By Christopher Preece

The Stables Gallery, Leominster, May 2025

I first picked up a camera when I was about 9 or 10, and I was allowed to take one film of photographs a year, which was 16 pictures. So, I only recorded special events and holidays.

By 1980, in my late teens, I was working, and I could afford to buy my own films, and so I started to record the ordinary and the everyday. The familiar places and faces that filled my life. I took these photos without really knowing why I was taking them or what I was doing. I had read a lot about documentary photography and so I started documenting things that were familiar, on my doorstep, my ordinary world.

I am a self-taught photographer - with the help of an evening course at Hereford College of Art. These are the images that I captured while learning how to use a camera, and how to develop film and print photographs.

As I look back on this collection of images, I wish that I had taken far more pictures, especially of people. I took these pictures to make a document for myself, to record what was in front of me. Over time, I have come to realise the value of capturing something that may change or disappear. I now see these images through other people's eyes, and as a document of the changes that occur over time.

I'm sharing these photos now, as I believe that Leominster is an extraordinary town, I want to celebrate the place that has been my home most of my life. I think that these images celebrate a small market town and its extraordinary people. Leominster has a shared culture, which I find difficult to describe, but which I value. It feels like home in its familiarity and friendliness.

I hope that you enjoy these photographs, and that they stimulate you to think about your place in your own town, and your connections to the people of your town.

Please share your comments in the book provided. Thank you for coming.

Christopher Preece

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