

An Exeter Bells Adventure 2026

A walking tour of five city centre towers, featuring St Stephen, St Pancras, St Petrock, St Mary Steps, and St Michael & All Angels (Mount Dinham)

Saturday 6th June 2026 (10am - 5pm)

Version 3.0 updated on 03/06/2026

The Exeter Branch Guild of Devonshire Ringers is delighted to revive the Exeter Walking Bells Tours, last run in the 1990s by Lester Yeo. Beginning on 6th June 2026, the first of our walking tours will visit churches around Exeter that ringers rarely have the chance to explore. While many of the towers are now unringable, they still offer a fascinating opportunity to discover new and historic places.

This tour involves a significant amount of walking, and access to some towers may be challenging. Please take particular care on stairs and ladders, and always follow the instructions of the tower guides. Ringing or chiming should be possible at most towers.

Please let Rob Neal know if you would like to come

You are welcome to attend all or part of the day, but please let Rob Neal know in advance which parts of the day you will be attending so numbers can be monitored. Email neal.robert@gmail.com or extersec@devonringers.org.uk; Phone 07891716952.

Church/tower donations

The Exeter Branch will be covering church donations so there is no cost for this outing.

Final Schedule

I have received permission from church contacts that we are allowed to visit the following towers. We should also have the opportunity to sound the bells at most towers (see comments in table below). These timings can be considered final as I have recently had follow up confirmation with all churches that our visit can go ahead.

Time	Location	Information
10:00 - 10:30	St Stephen's Church, Exeter, High St, Exeter, EX4 3LW (1 bell)	St Stephen's is part of the Parish of Central Exeter (https://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/). It has 1 bell, hung dead from girders and chimed with a lever clapper. It weighs 3 cwt. It was cast by Taylors in 1947. This bell was recast from the metal of three bells which were destroyed by enemy action in May 1942. The access is very tight in St Stephen's vestry to see the bell as there are 3 or 4 metal steps to the door which allows access to the bell. Contacts: Mary Keaney (Administrator) and Jim (Caretaker) who will be opening up for us and showing us around.
10:45 - 11:15	St Pancras Church, Guildhall Shopping	Part of the Parish of Central Exeter (https://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/). Access to the single bell cote is from the ground floor. This bell was chimed by the Exeter

	<p>Precinct, Exeter, EX4 3HP</p> <p>(1 bell)</p>	<p>Branch last time they visited in the 1990s.</p> <p>The bell is viewable from outside and we should be able to chime it using the chiming mechanism inside.</p> <p>Contacts: Mary Keaney (Administrator) and Jim (Caretaker) who will be opening up for us and showing us around.</p>
11:30 - 12:45	<p>St Petrock's Church, High St, Exeter, EX4 3LN</p> <p>(6 bells hung for ringing, the former 3rd from Ashburton, and the George Tribe micro ring)</p>	<p>Part of the Parish of Central Exeter (https://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/). A set of six bells hung for ringing in an oak frame by Stokes, 1878. The bells are rung from the ground floor. Access to the belfry is via an internal staircase. There is a ladder to the roof above the belfry stage. Treble: G, 2nd: F, 3rd: Eb, 4th: D, 5th: C, Tenor: Bb (5-0-0 cwt). Rehung in cast-iron headstocks and ball-bearings by Fidler, 1989. They were also very successful machine-tuned by Whitechapel in 1989. Amazing views from the top of the tower if access allows. The former 3rd for Ashburton is resting on the floor in front of you as you enter through the front door. The George Tribe micro ring (6 bells) is also housed in the church. George Tribe built the frame and bells as a working model to show how bells are rung and hung.</p> <p>Contacts: Mary Keaney (Administrator) and Mark Bertram (Tower Captain). Mark will be letting us in.</p>
12:45 - 14:00	Lunch	Suggested locations: George's Meeting House (Weatherspoons pub), South Street, or a picnic on Cathedral Green.
14:15 - 15:15	<p>St Mary Steps Church, West St, Exeter, EX1 1BB</p> <p>(4 bells)</p>	<p>This church is part of the Heavitree Parish (https://heavitreeparish.co.uk/st-mary-steps/). Dove's guide: https://dove.cccb.org.uk/detail.php?searchString=Exeter&Submit=+Go+&DoveID=EXETER++MS. It has 4 bells with the tenor weighing 6 cwt. A narrow spiral staircase leads up through the tower into a small chamber containing the mechanism for the early-17th century clock with automatons which sits high up on the southern face of the bell tower. From here the staircase ascends in almost total darkness to the belfry at the top of the tower. There, hanging in the gloom and affixed to a web of enormous oak beams, are four large bronze bells, all cast by John Pennington in Exeter in 1656. The belfry has barely been touched for decades. It is indescribably atmospheric and the four bells have tremendous presence. The last time the Exeter Branch visited this tower in the 1990s, they found the belfry neglected and the clock mechanism tangled through the wheels. However, the wheels have since been removed and the bells are chimed on an ellacombe downstairs. There are good views from the top of the tower if access is allowed. According to https://demolition-exeter.blogspot.com/2010/12/st-mary-steps-church-west-street.html, "The bells are inscribed as follows i) When I Call Follow Me All I.P 1656 ii) Gloria Soli Deo Detur (Let Glory be Given to God Alone) iii) Richard Meredith John Ball Churchwardens, 1656 and iv) John Pennington of Exon Cast Us Four 1656. It's quite something, to think of the bells hanging here since the time of Cromwell and the Civil War and the changes which have swept across the world in the subsequent 350 years. The bells can still be rung via ropes which descend into the lower chamber (one of these ropes can be seen in the photograph). The ropes move the clapper rather than the bell itself but they can still make a very loud sound."</p> <p>Contact: Alex Honey (Susan Illing will be letting us in)</p>

15:45 - 17:00	St Michael and All Angels Church, Mount Dinham, Exeter, EX4 4EB (1 bell)	<p>The church of St Michael & All Angels, Mount Dinham, was originally built with a tower designed to have eight bells, but it only has one. The following is from a letter that appeared in the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette in 1869 (Gibbs was the benefactor of the church): "There would have been a very fine peal of bells in St Michael's tower had it not been for the objection raised by a few persons. A memorial, numerously signed by parishioners resident in the neighbourhood of the Church, was presented to Mr Gibbs, stating that the bells would be most acceptable, but in consequence of the objectors... the city has lost them". The ringing chamber is complete and the single bell was swung to make it ring last time the Exeter Branch visited in the 1990s. The bell is 26 cwt and was intended to be the tenor. Access to the ringing chamber is fine and there is a large solid floor which forms the ringing room. The bell is on a half floor above so is visible from the ringing room. It can be swung using the rope but is very hard work. A video of the bell being rung is at https://www.facebook.com/100021749796165/videos/pcb.9606326862810702/1311620413282771 (Henry Grice's Facebook post).</p> <p>Contacts: Richard and Leontina, who will both be showing us around. Richard informs me that the bearings were recently oiled so it should be easier to ring than it has been lately.</p>
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