



## About St Martin's

St Martin's is one of the best preserved small medieval churches of Exeter. An early 13th-century document records bequests to 28 chapels in the city, but there were once many more – nine stood within the Cathedral Close! By 1900, 14 parish churches still survived within the city walls; now only eight remain, six of which are in regular use.

The origin of these churches is uncertain. Excavations in the Cathedral Close in 1971–76 showed this area was used as a Christian burial place from the late Roman period, but many of the city churches are believed to be of Saxon origin. St Martin's is known to have been consecrated to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Cross, Mary Mother of God, St Martin and All the Saints of God on 6 July 1065.

The church stands at an unusual angle to the neighbouring streets and almost nothing in it is square. The tall, narrow nave is of Saxon date. The chancel lies at a different angle and its east wall is noticeably askew. The 15th- or 16th-century tower stands outside the parish boundary, for which a rent of fourpence was paid annually to the Dean & Chapter.

St Martin's is notable today for its post-Reformation furnishings, including 17th-century altar rails and reredos, box pews and many magnificent monuments. It owes the preservation of these furnishings both to long periods of disuse and to sensitive restorations by the local architect Edward Ashworth in 1865 and 1867–68.

In 1995 the church was declared redundant. It was subsequently transferred to the care of The Churches Conservation Trust. St Martin's remains a consecrated building and is available for occasional services and events.

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### Access

Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

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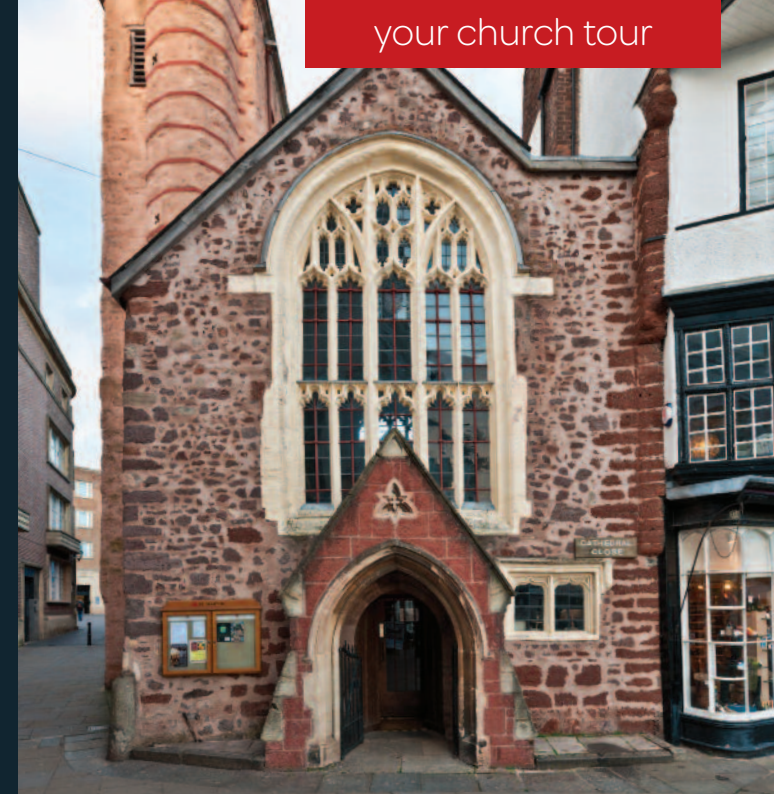
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your church tour



Church of  
St Martin

Cathedral Close, Exeter, Devon



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1 The **nave** contains Saxon masonry, but is lit by later windows and covered by a late-medieval **'wagon' roof** decorated with carved **bosses**. The furnishings include typical 18th- or early 19th-century **box pews** with doors, and a panelled **pulpit** installed in c. 1804.

2 The 17th-century **gallery** is ornamented with **painting panels**. The two outer panels depict trumpeting angels; in the centre is the Royal Arms with, to right and left, the Arms of the City of Exeter and of the See of Exeter impaling those of Bishop Trelawny (1689–1707).



3 The magnificent Beer stone **west window** is one of the finest late-medieval windows in any of the city churches. The central light contains **painting glass** depicting the Arms of the See of Exeter impaling those of Bishop Courtenay (1478–86).

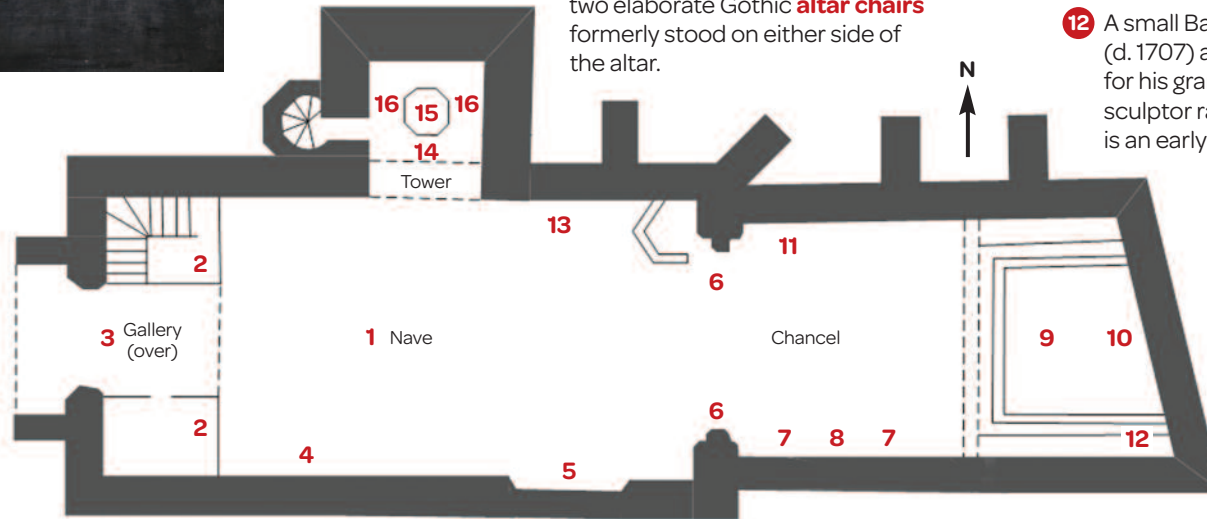
4 A **painting panel** on the south wall of the nave bears the Royal Arms of Charles I, dated 1635. This was recently discovered built into the ceiling of the tower, where it may have been concealed for protection during the upheavals of the Civil War and Commonwealth and then forgotten!



5 The nave south window has 15th-century **heraldic glass** panels, including the Arms of Bishop Lacy (1420–55), the See of Exeter, and the Askewith and Southcote families. At the very top the **descending dove** of the Holy Spirit can just be seen, perhaps reset from another window.

6 The tall, chamfered piers of the **chancel arch** probably date from the 13th century. One contains an **image niche** suggesting the presence of a side altar. In 1806 the chancel arch preserved a 'handsome Gothic screen' but this was removed when the arch was demolished and a timber window was inserted at roof level.

7 The chancel also retains a medieval **wagon roof**, but this is concealed by a later ceiling. This area was formerly seated with fixed pews, but these were replaced in the 20th century with modern **returned stalls** in 17th-century style. The two elaborate Gothic **altar chairs** formerly stood on either side of the altar.



8 In the chancel, in a glass case, is a **Vinegar Bible**, published by John Baskett in Oxford in 1717. These Bibles are so called from a misprint in the chapter heading to Luke 20, which reads 'The Parable of the Vinegar' instead of 'the Vineyard'. Contemporary commentators described this edition as 'A Baskett full of errors'.



9 The **sanctuary** has some of the most important late 17th-century furnishings, including the **reredos**, painted with the **Creed and Commandments**, recently restored. The barley-sugar **altar rails** surround the altar on three sides and there are fixed **communicants' benches** against the north and south walls.



11 The **wall monument** to Philip Hooper (d. 1715) shows him kneeling at a desk piled with books and a skull. This is attributed to the local sculptor John Weston.

12 A small Baroque **monument** to William Holwell (d. 1707) and his family has an unfinished inscription for his granddaughter Elizabeth, possibly because the sculptor ran out of space. Beneath the south window is an early **Gothic Revival** monument of 1845.

13 A fine **wall monument** with a punning inscription commemorates 'Judeath' Wakeman (d. 1643). The tablet to her granddaughter Elizabeth Butler below (d. 1644) is flanked by grave-digging angels.

14 The **tower** was added in the late 15th or early 16th century, and was originally surmounted by tall pinnacles. It contains a single bell, cast by the Exeter bell founder Thomas Pennington in 1675.

15 The octagonal **font** may be of medieval date and has a small additional ledge on the shaft, probably for the Oil of Chrism used at Baptism.

16 In the tower are two very large **monuments**, part of a group brought here from St Paul's church when it was demolished in 1936. The monument to Sir Edward Seaward (d. 1703) features portly cherubs clutching symbols of death. Opposite, Eliza Mary Mortimer (d. 1826) is borne heavenward from her tomb by an angel.

