

St Mary the Virgin

The Bell Tower

Church Lane
Marden
Hereford
HR1 3EN



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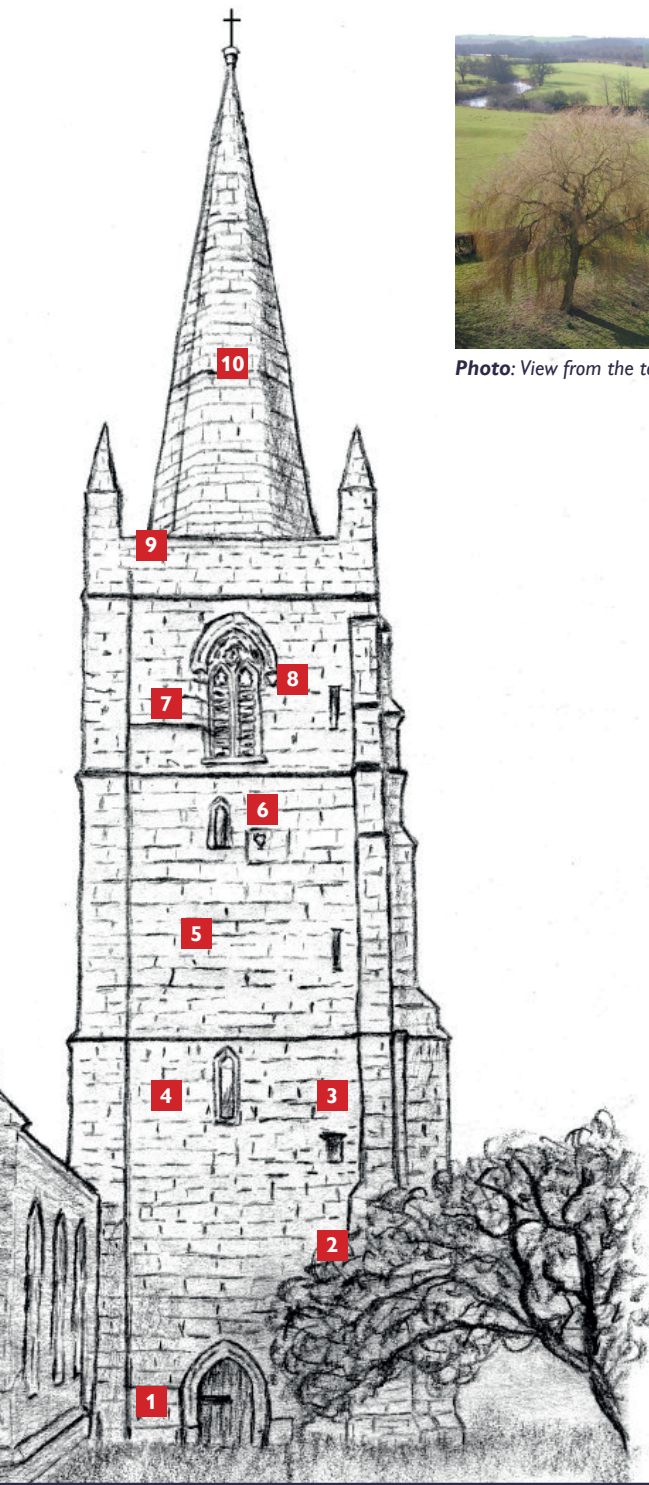


Photo: View from the top of the tower (Mike Steadman)



Photo: Crest of arms of builder or chief contributor to the tower (Mike Steadman)

- 1** Ground floor
- 2** Axe engraving
- 3** Spiral staircase
- 4** First floor
- 5** Second floor
- 6** Upper chamber
- 7** Bell chamber
- 8** Coat of arms
- 9** Roof / walkway
- 10** Spire

The bell tower was built in the 14th century, around 1320.

There is evidence of a yew tree forest in the area and it is possible that the tower is built on a yew foundation as it was widely used as medieval footings. Yew will last in soil for many hundreds of years.

There are engravings on the east wall of an axe and a bird (or is it a mermaid?). The origins are unknown.



Photo: Axe engraving on east wall

On entering the ground floor, you notice that the interior of the tower is surprisingly small since the walls are some six feet thick.

At some point, probably during the 19th century, the ringing chamber was relocated to the ground floor from its original position on the first floor in line with the fashion at the time. This made the bells notoriously difficult to ring. The chamber was relocated again, back to the first floor, in the 1950s.



Photo: Stairwell in the bell tower (Mike Steadman)

There are 84 steps to the top. The staircase is very narrow and spiral in design. This is in keeping with the practice used in castles where the sword arms of the defenders had more room to manoeuvre.

The first floor was used as the ringing chamber until 2006 when it was deemed generally unsafe to ring the bells until major restoration had taken place.

There is graffiti on the walls of the first floor, especially within the window recess. This dates back to the 18th century, the earliest identifiable example is from 1772.

During the major restoration project in 2015 / 2016 the ringing chamber was again relocated, this time to the second floor, which was previously derelict.

At one time, there would have been an upper chamber with access via a ladder from the second floor.

There are six bells in the bell chamber. The bell frames are metal, mounted on timber.

The dates in the castings of the bells are still visible and indicate:

Treble:	1774
Second:	1622
Third:	1622
Fourth:	1770 (recast 1909)
Fifth:	1710 (recast 1909)
Tenor:	1622



Photo: A birds eye view of the bells, prior to restoration. (Mike Steadman)

At the top of the spiral staircase is a small wooden door covered by a wooden hatchway. There is a narrow walkway along all four sides of the tower providing excellent views across the countryside.

There is 18th or 19th century graffiti on the base of the spire.

During the Civil War it is known that there were skirmishes in the



Photo: The walkway around the top of the tower (Mike Steadman)

Marden area and it is believed that one unfortunate soldier was chased to the tower where he was eventually cornered and killed in the upper ringing chamber.

It is also rumoured that the ghost of the soldier still haunts the tower!

The bells and bell tower underwent a comprehensive refurbishment in 2015/2016 at a cost of approximately £160,000. This was a major undertaking but the bells can once again ring out.