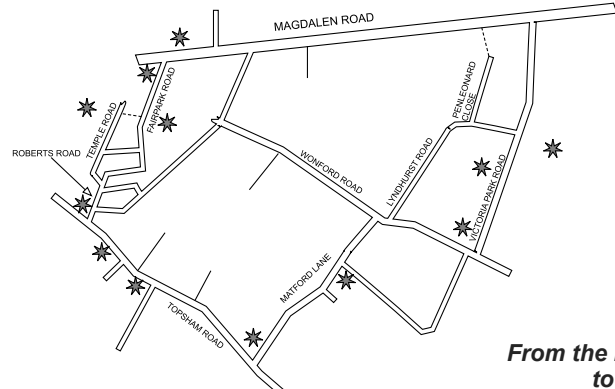


**St Leonards walks. Walk 3
Alms Houses, Schools and a Church.**

Steps: approx. 5000
Distance: approx. 2 miles
Time: approx. 1.5 hrs

From the Magdalen Road shops head towards the city centre to reach the Magdalen Cottages Alms Houses

Magdalen Cottages. These alms houses are administered by The Exeter Homes Trust. The trust has existed in various forms for about 900 years and still serves its original purpose of providing homes for local people 'in reduced circumstances'. Admission criteria and some of the history of the trust can be found on their website. They now administer 8 sets of alms houses in Exeter. Magdalen Cottages were originally founded in the 11th century as the Mary Magdalen Alms Houses. They were rebuilt, with typical Victorian architectural embellishments, in Pocombe stone, in 1863. Next to them are the white-painted, 20th century Alms Houses, **North Park**. This cluster of buildings consists of 12, one bedroomed houses.



Cross Magdalen Road and enter Fairpark Road

On both sides of the road are the **Hurst Trump Alms Houses**. Set into the garden wall of the block on the left-hand side of the road, just inside the small iron gate, is the original foundation stone. In 1552, the will of William Hurst (5 times Mayor of Exeter) left six tenements for the use of poor people. The current houses were built in 1928 and 1958, with a gift from Margaret Kathrine Trump adding a further block of 20 homes. In the centre of the lawn is a small tree with memorial plaque. This commemorates the planting of the tree as part of 'The Queens Green Canopy', 2022. The Victorian, **Ernsborough House** was originally a private house before becoming a geriatric hospital after WW2. In the 1980s it was converted back into residential use.



Go down the sloping alleyway, opposite Ernsborough and alongside the alms houses, to emerge in Bull Meadow on Temple Road. Turn left and walk alongside the park to the end of Temple Road and its junction with Roberts Road.



Bull Meadow Park (named after the Bull Inn, once situated on Magdalen Street) became a public park in 1889. It is the last open space remaining of the valley of the Chutebrooke, (now culverted) which flows into the Exe. The steep slopes of the valley made travel difficult and it was eventually spanned by a bridge/viaduct, built 1832 -1840. The huge retaining walls of the viaduct (Pocombe stone topped with Dartmoor granite) form one boundary of the park. The *Exeter Memories website* has a detailed history of the park, the acquisition of the land by the council and the various plans to build on it - thankfully always defeated by local opposition!

Temple Road and the surrounding roads are examples of the terraced houses, built for workers in the latter half of the 19th century, one can still see the boot-scrapers beside each front door. When first built they could be rented for around 2s. 6d - 4s. 6d (12.5p-22.5p) a week and after WW2 they could be bought for about £1000.

The brick building at the junction of Temple Road and Roberts Road (currently being converted into housing) was built in 1890 as the **Sunday School and Mission Hall** of St Leonards Church. It continued to be used for Church purposes until its sale in 2017. There is fine stone detailing around the windows and door arches.



At the junction of Roberts Road and Topsham Road, cross at the pedestrian lights and turn left to walk uphill.

By the crossing is no 38 Holloway Road, built of red Heavitree stone. This is a remnant of the medieval **Great Larkbeare House** (first mentioned in 1258) most of which was demolished when Holloway Road was widened in the late 19th century. The story of its near total demolition and rescue by the council and Devon Historic Houses Trust in the 1970s can be found on the *Exeter Memories website*. The impish figure in the wall niche is a modern addition! Near the top of the hill pass **Larkbeare House** (1870), built of Berry Head limestone. The grounds were laid out by the famous Exeter nurserymen and plant hunters, Veitch. The house and grounds were bought in 1877 by Devon County Council and used as the lodging house for visiting assizes judges. Over the years it has been also used as a girls' school, various council offices and the registry office. It is currently up for sale and its future uncertain.



Continue uphill along Topsham Road, passing Larkbeare Road to reach the granite gate posts at the top of Weirfield Road and enter the grounds of St Leonards Church.

A chapel/ church has been on this site since the 12th century (named after St Leonard, a venerated Saint in the Middle Ages and known for his intercession for prisoners, captives, women in labour and diseased cattle!). The current building dates from 1876 onwards, being built in stages with the tower added in 1884, and a recent addition being the church rooms extension. Again the *Exeter Memories website* gives a detailed history of the church. The church is kept locked so the impressive interior cannot be visited by walkers on this stroll but one can circumnavigate the building to appreciate its Victorian solidity. The graveyard is now largely cleared but members of the Baring family (wealthy St Leonards land and homeowners) and the Hooper family (builders of many of St Leonards larger villas) were buried here.

Cross back over Topsham Road at the pedestrian lights and continue walking away from the city centre.

The brick wall you are now following was the boundary wall of **Parker's Well House** (demolished) and grounds. It is now the site of **St Leonard's Primary School**. The school, along with **St Nicholas Catholic Primary School**, moved to this site in the 1970s from premises on Holloway Road and Preston Street. **Turn left into Matford lane.** The colourful classrooms on the left-hand side of Matford Lane were added to the primary school using space vacated by St Nicholas's School when it moved to a new site in Whipton. The enlarged St Leonards Primary now numbers approx 600 pupils.

Continue up Matford Lane to its junction with Matford Avenue

Immediately on your right, behind the iron railings is a small section of DCC grounds containing a magnificent Lucombe Oak tree, several hundred years old. Matford Ave contains a variety of houses built from Victorian times to the present century.

Cross over Wonford Road and up Victoria Park Road slightly to your right.

Near the junction is the entrance to **Larkby and Matford Lodge**, providing NHS Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. **Victoria Park Road** contains two schools. On the left is **Magdalen Court School**, a special school for 70 pupils with special needs presenting as 'high-level anxiety school refusal'. On the right are the playing fields and Victorian building of **Exeter School**.



Exeter School 's foundation dates from 1633 as a charitable 'free grammar school'. It moved to its present site in the 1880s when the Victorian building (designed by the architect William Butterfield) was completed. Throughout most of the 20th century it remained a grammar school under various state and charitable funding models before becoming completely 'independent' in 1976. It now is a co-educational, fee-paying school of about 1000 pupils. Across the playing fields can be seen the recently built **RILD (Research, Innovation, Learning and Development)** complex situated in the grounds of the RDE Hospital. This is a joint research facility between the University Medical School and the local NHS Trust.



After the Victoria Park Tennis Club, the second oldest tennis club in England, turn left into Lyndhurst Road. Just before the road turns the corner cross over and enter Penleoneard Close on your right. Walk to the turning circle at the very end of the Close. On the left-hand side is a narrow footpath. Follow this to its junction with Magdalen Road. Turn left and head back toward the Magdalen Road shops and the start of the walk.