In 2017, the 175 year old roof-slates and tons of weathered stonework were replaced, and much of the ceiling plaster was renewed. This £800,000 project was largely paid for by the parish but supported by a £250,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our church and associated buildings are all listed Grade II by Historic England.

We are open every day for visits, prayers and services. Our five Sunday Masses attract well over 1,000 participants every week. Our congregations are wonderfully diverse in terms of age, race, and talents. Some of the national groups are organised to sustain the contribution made by their own cultural traditions. Many volunteers, both Catholic and non-Catholic, are engaged in the running of the parish, in outreach to the local community, and in making our history and heritage better known.

For visiting arrangements and event times, please take a look at:

stpeterswoolwich.church
Pugin’s first church in London

Many years of working-class Irish immigration, for jobs around Woolwich arsenal, dockyard and barracks, encouraged the government in 1841 to give the site for a Catholic church in Woolwich New Road. Augustus Pugin was already designing the future St George’s Cathedral in Southwark. Here he was asked to plan a more economical church, which in 1843 became his first to open in London.

Augustus Pugin, 1812 – 1852

A prolific architect and designer of building ornamentation, Pugin was also a leading advocate for reviving medieval Gothic, ‘pointed’ architecture. As a Catholic convert, he believed this style would help to heal contemporary social problems of industrialisation.

Pugin helped Charles Barry win the architectural competition for rebuilding Parliament’s Palace of Westminster in the Gothic style. Designing the interior details of the Palace occupied a major part of Pugin’s later years, and his plans for Big Ben were his last work before his early death.

Although Pugin’s design was economical, and the parish still could not afford to complete his vision, the building clearly displays many characteristics of his genius.

South doorway

Pugin always hoped that his churches would eventually have steeples. At St Peter’s the base was built, including access stairs, for a steeple in the southwest corner. The south doorway is richly ornamented with carvings to complement the intended steeple above, which was never completed.

Nave roof

The steep nave roof is supported internally by impressive timber trusses with scissor-bracing near the top.

Lady Chapel

Pugin returned in 1850 for this second phase of work on his building. Though shorter than he had envisaged in 1842, the chapel shows how his regular collaborators, Minton and Hardman, contributed to fulfil his design.

Stained glass

The windows above the High Altar and the Lady Altar are both fine Pugin designs. They survived Second World War bombs which damaged the roof and windows of the south aisle.

Baptism font

The octagonal stone font is deeply carved with Pugin’s design, including the traditional emblems of the four Gospel writers.

Key features

Key dates for St Peter’s

1842 Foundation stone laid, 26th October
1843 St Peter’s opens, 26th October
1850 Lady Chapel added
1889 Sanctuary and St Joseph Chapel added
1895 Stations of the Cross transferred from St George’s Cathedral
1905 St Joseph altar and window added
1968 Temporary forward altar set up in sanctuary
1982 Parquet laid over the floor tiles; gallery extended with foyer below
1993 New stone forward altar installed

History

In 1816, the first Catholic chapel was dedicated to St Patrick, for its mainly Irish congregation. A chapel leased from the Methodists replaced this in 1818, but could accommodate only 400. By 1841, Woolwich had about 3,000 Catholics.

The story of St Peter

He was originally called Simon, but Jesus gave him this name, meaning ‘rock’, indicating his future role as the sturdy base for the unity of the Church. The Bible shows Peter as the foremost in declaring faith in Jesus, and the leader of the first Christians. Jesus promised to give him “the keys of the kingdom of heaven”, so depictions of Peter generally show him holding a pair of keys.