Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

St PETER'S CATHEDRAL, LANCASTER

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Before St Peter's Cathedral was built in Lancaster, the town's Roman Catholic community had worshipped in a small chapel on St Leonard's Gate, opposite the Grand Theatre. They then built the Dalton Square Mission (now known as Palatine Hall). In time this hemmed-in building was too small, so three acres were purchased on East Road in 1847.



St Peter's Cathedral, Lancaster

By 1853 a school and a convent with a chapel for the nun-teachers had been completed there. There was also a cemetery (1849–50). Then St Peter's Church was built between 1857 and 1859 along with the Presbytery. They were designed by Edward Paley, the town's leading architect. and are among his finest works. Many of the contractors were also local firms.

The principal benefactor was Thomas Coulston, and many other Catholic families contributed. The Cathedral is Grade 2* listed. The current school on Balmoral Road was built in 1895–7.

The Church – it became a Cathedral in 1924 when the diocese of Lancaster was created – is Gothic Revival in style. The first thing you notice is the spire (240 feet, 73 metres). Inside, the layout is traditional with nave, chancel and apse on a west-east alignment with seating for 600.

The baptistry to the north was added by Hubert Austin in 1895 and consecrated in 1901. It is polygonal in plan and has a pyramidal copper roof. The interior of the church / cathedral was reorganised by Giles Gilbert Scott in 1909, reordered again in the 1970s and for a third time in 1994 when some of Scott's work was re-introduced.

The interior is remarkable for the richness of the decoration – stained glass, wall and ceiling paintings, decorated floors, carvings, statues and sculptures. The roof has Lancastrian symbols. The main reredos by Giles Gilbert Scott is complex.

The stained glass is by Hardman of Birmingham (a leading national supplier) and by Shrigley and Hunt of Lancaster. A mosaic floor displays lilies. There are wall paintings with more Christian scenes. The choir stalls and their misericords were also designed by Austin and Paley in 1899. The iconography in the baptistry by Shrigley and Hunt is very fine. A tour of this complex building should not be rushed.

Reading
The Cathedral's guide book gives more detailed descriptions of the Cathedral's many architectural and artistic works.
Its website is informative: https://lancastercathedral.org.uk

Guide 80 describes St Joseph's Church in Skerton, Lancaster

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