St Clement with St Peter Church

Active
Church of England
Friern Road, East Dulwich SE22 0AY

St Clement exterior

St Clement original church exterior and bomb damage

Historical summary
St Clement's was started by members of St John's, East Dulwich with an iron mission church in Hindmans Road in 1881. They found St John's too crowded and too "low" in the light of the Catholic Revival movement. It became a separate parish in 1883 when the first Vicar was appointed. Bishop of Rochester appealed for funds to build 10 new churches in the diocese (this being before the diocese of Southwark was created). Francis Peek (see Emmanuel church which he had already helped to fund in 1876) agreed that he would meet the costs of building a new church (St Clement's) if the target of the appeal was met and if he could name a friend as the first incumbent. His friend refused the living. This 1885 of Gothic red brick church with stone facings was destroyed in WW2 in 1940. A new church was built in 1957.

The current church is of modern design by L. Keir Hett of Searle & Searle on a slightly elevated rectangular site with a separate prefabricated church hall at the rear (west end). A tower and two storey galleried area at the west end (main entrance) and single storey ancillary accommodation with chapel, wrapped around the east end. The aisled

nave is of pointed arched, or “keel” shaped section. Above the altar (from a bombed church in Lewisham) in the east wall is one of the earliest examples of coloured glass and concrete design. The windows are by a young local craftsman J. Francis Love. The parish joined with St Peter's, Lordship Lane 1986.

Historical background
Old St Clement’s
As the southern part of Camberwell parish expanded, some members of St John’s congregation wanted a new church where worship could follow the more ritualistic traditions of the Catholic Revival. A temporary Mission Church, dedicated to St Clement, opened in Hindmans Road in 1881, accommodating more than 200 people.

A permanent site was purchased in Friern Road in 1882, and building began in 1884. The church was dedicated in 1885 and formally consecrated by the Bishop of Rochester. Designed in the Gothic style, it was built of red brick with Bath stone dressings. The building was largely funded by London merchant Francis Peek, while its furnishings and decoration were donated by friends and supporters. The parish was formally established in 1886, with the Reverend H. E. Jennings as its first incumbent.

St Clement’s soon became known for its strong Anglo-Catholic tradition. Candles were introduced on the altar in 1890, vestments were worn from 1891 and incense was used soon afterwards. The parish hall in Barry Road was built in 1894 by the architect J. Stacey Davis. Jennings served the parish for more than 50 years, retiring in 1936. Rev. Jennings was succeeded in 1937 by the E. Walker, Vicar of Royston in Yorkshire. His ministry was cut short when the church was destroyed by a bomb in 1940.

New St Clement’s
After the war Fr Walker was succeeded by Fr D. F. Strudwick, previously Vicar of St Luke’s, Peckham, who became the third vicar of St Clement’s in 1949. The parish commissioned the architect L. Keir Hett in 1951. The project was delayed by difficulties obtaining building licences and securing finance. The local geology also proved challenging to the foundations. Eventually, sixty-six concrete piles were driven into the ground to provide a secure foundation. W. J. Mitchell & Sons of Dulwich Village were employed as builders and the foundation stone was laid in 1956.

The new St Clement’s provided seating for around 250, vestries and rooms for servers and Sunday School classes, a side chapel, a pipe organ, and a tower with a gallery and belfry.

Sources: London Archives. Jane Packman, ‘The First Century of St Clement’s East Dulwich’, 1981