

Big Ben

Big Ben is the north end of the Palace of Westminster in London. The tower is officially known as Elizabeth Tower, renamed to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II in 2012 and was completed in 1858 and had its 150th anniversary on 31 May 2009. It was raised as a part of Charles Barry's design for a new palace, after the old Palace of Westminster was largely destroyed by fire on the night of 16 October 1834. The new Parliament was built in new gothic style.



The bottom 200 feet of the tower's structure consists of brickwork with sand coloured Anston limestone cladding. The remainder of the tower's height is a framed spire of cast iron. The tower is founded on a 50 feet square raft, made of 10 feet thick concrete, at a depth of 13 feet below ground level. The four clock dials are 180 feet above ground. The interior volume of the tower is 164,200 cubic feet.

The clock and dials were designed by Augustus Pugin. The clock dials are set in an iron frame 23 feet in diameter, supporting 312 pieces of opal glass, rather like a stained-glass window. The surround of the dials is gilded. At the base of each clock dial in gilt letters is the Latin inscription: DOMINE SALVAM FAC REGINAM NOSTRAM VICTORIAM PRIMAM



Despite being one of the world's most famous tourist attractions, the interior of the tower is not open to overseas visitors, though United Kingdom residents are able to arrange tours through their Member of Parliament. However, the tower has no lift, so those escorted must climb the 334 limestone stairs to the top.

Due to changes in ground conditions since construction the tower leans slightly to the northwest, approximately 220 mm in the clock display, giving an inclination of approximately 1/250. Big Ben was going to sound for three minutes before the start of the opening ceremony of the Great Britain Olympic Games.

