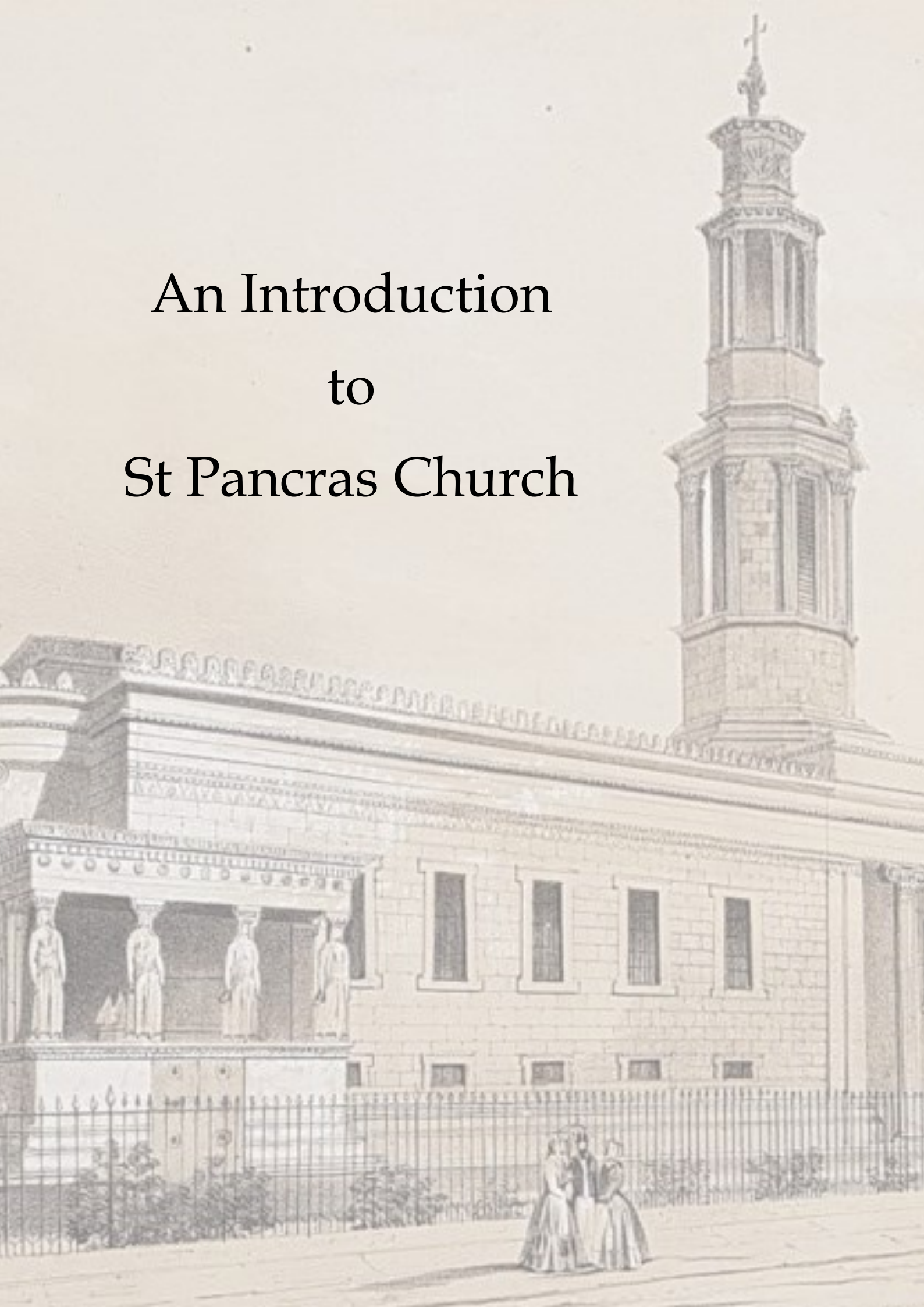


An Introduction  
to  
St Pancras Church



## *An Introduction by the Vicar*

St Pancras Church celebrated its Bicentenary on 7th May 2022. Such occasions are momentous events in the life of a church. Like any anniversary they invite us to celebrate everything that has been good, learn the lessons of our history, and re-set our course for the future newly inspired by the steadfast love and faithfulness of God.

Looking back over the last two hundred years, I wonder how many lives have been touched by God through the ministry of this church? How many people have attended services, or called in briefly to say their prayers? How many families have come here for their weddings and baptisms and funeral services? How many times has the local community gathered here to mark significant events in the life of the city and the nation?

And what about those beyond the walls of the church? As our curiously pagan caryatids show, St Pancras has always been a place where the church meets the world. Our ancient parish boundaries helped shape the local borough and our Parish Vestry began most of the social and educational work that the Council later took on. The church's role in the community has changed over the years, but it has always continued to offer spiritual care and practical help in our diverse parish which embraces the leafy squares of Bloomsbury and the social housing of Somers Town. Through thick and thin, the church has been a place where rich and poor have met, and where new arrivals have been welcomed. It has provided a place of shelter in wartime, and a place of safety in pandemics. In each and every generation, the people of this church have blessed the living and commemorated the dead; we have rejoiced with those who rejoice and wept with those who weep; and we have consistently given voice to the cares and concerns of local residents.

This is what parish churches do, and we thank God for all they contribute to the life of the nation. We give thanks for those whose vision and generosity brought this church into being, and those whose prayers, gifts and labours have sustained it ever since. We stand on the shoulders of giants, and pray for grace to build on their work now and in generations to come as we continue to worship God, to serve this parish, and to proclaim the good news of God's saving love in word and deed.

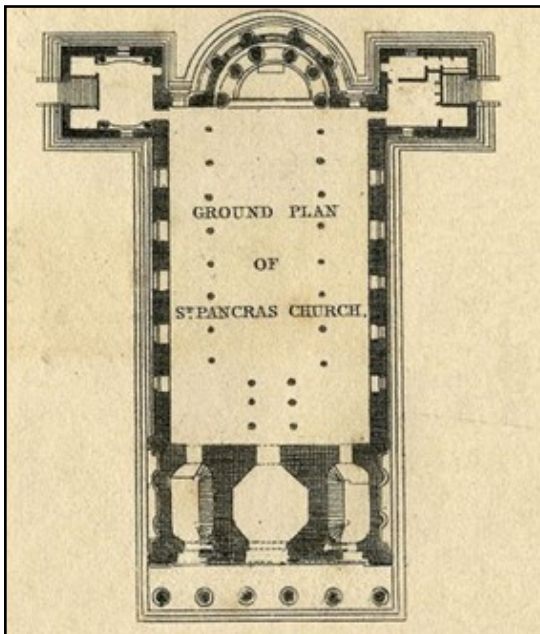
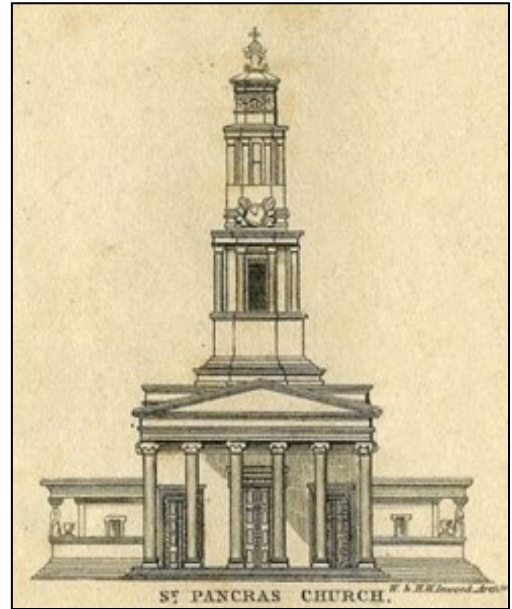
*Revd Anne Stevens*

## The Building & its History

In the early 1800s a new church was needed to accommodate the rapidly expanding population in this part of London. It was to replace the ancient parish church to the north, where the original population had moved away and the building had fallen into disrepair. (Old St Pancras Church was later rebuilt in 1848.)

The competition to design the church was won by local architects, William Inwood and his son Henry William Inwood. Finding inspiration in both Athens and London, they copied the Tower of the Winds and the two caryatid porches from the Acropolis, and followed St Martin-in-the-Fields in building a large Ionic portico at the west end of the church.

As a significant early example of Greek Revival architecture in London, the church holds a Grade 1 listing on the National Heritage Register for England.



The foundation stone was laid in 1819 by the Duke of York, and the building was completed in 3 years at a cost of £76,000 (at the time the most expensive church in London after St Paul's). The builder was Isaac Seabrook.

The church was consecrated on 7th May 1822 by the Bishop of London. It has been used for worship ever since. Even when the nave of the church was closed for repairs after the Second World War, weddings and baptisms took place in the North Vestry.

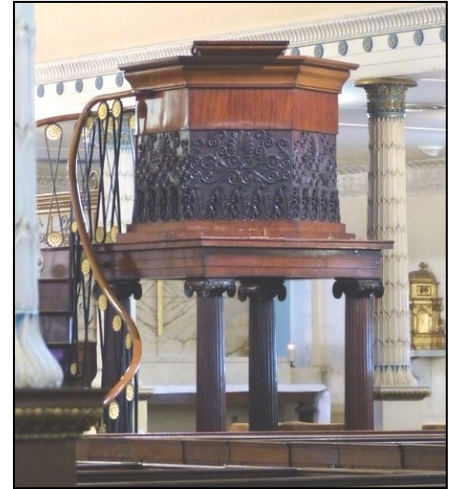
Most of the church's original features remain, although some re-ordering has taken place. The Victorians added the choir stalls and stained glass windows in the 1880s. The apse was re-modelled in 1914, when the large ebony altar and the brass cross behind it were commissioned. The North Chapel was added in 1970.

## The Church's Main Features

**The Pulpit** was made in 1822 with wood from the famous Fairlop Oak in Hainault Forest which had blown down in a gale two years earlier. It originally stood further back in the sanctuary

**The Altar in the South Chapel** was the original altar of the church.

**The Royal Arms** include the Arms of Hanover. George IV was King when the church opened.



**The Organ**, built originally for the New Music Hall in Birmingham, is by Gray & Davison. It was bought for £400 in 1864. The smaller modern chamber organ is by Peter Collins.

### The Stained Glass Windows

The church had clear glass windows when it first opened. The three East windows were installed in 1866. The rest, designed by Clayton & Bell, were completed in 1881. The windows downstairs depict scenes from the life of Christ, while the larger windows upstairs represent figures from the Te Deum in the Book of Common Prayer:

*'The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.  
The godly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.  
The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.'*





**Two sets of Greek Caryatids** support the porches over the crypt doors. They are the church's most unique feature, giving the building a surprisingly pagan appearance. St Pancras has always been a place where the church meets the world.

Unlike the Athenian originals these figures hold water jugs and torches to accompany the dead to their final resting place in the crypt. Legend has it that the caryatids were initially too tall for the porches. Their waistlines bear the scars of the ensuing corrective surgery.

The caryatids are made from Coade stone set around columns of Portland stone. Iron fixings provide additional support. They were made by the sculptor JCF Rossi who had previously worked at the Coade factory in South London.

Rossi also made the fine **terra cotta decorations** that line the roof and tower of the church.

In 2017 the church's Portico Project won the John Betjeman Award for the detailed repair work on these decorations. Heritage England are currently using some of the terra cotta on the church tower to test new repair and preservation techniques.



After 200 years living next to the Euston Road, the Caryatids are beginning to show their age.

The **St Pancras Bicentenary Appeal** will be launched in the autumn of 2022. The main aim is to raise funds to restore the caryatids and improve access for all visitors to the church.

Details of the Appeal will be available on the church's website:

*[www.stpancraschurch.org](http://www.stpancraschurch.org)*

**The Crypt** of St Pancras Church was used for burials between 1822 and 1855, when burials in Central London ceased. Only 560 interments took place, which left many of the vaults empty. The crypt served as an air raid shelter for local residents in both World Wars.



In recent years the eastern part of the Crypt has been adapted for use as the Crypt Art Gallery. One of the most evocative spaces in London, the gallery is used for exhibitions, book launches, arts events, photo shoots and filming.

*[www.cryptgallery.org](http://www.cryptgallery.org)*

**The Clock and Bells** of St Pancras form part of the local soundscape on the Euston Road.

All eight bells can be rung by one person as they are linked to a chiming apparatus in the bell-tower. During the day the clock rings the Westminster Chimes every quarter of an hour.



**The Statue of the Archangel Michael** in the South Garden is by the sculptor Emily Young. It commemorates those killed and injured in the London Bombings on 7th July 2005. Two of the four explosions occurred in the parish, and the church became a focal point for people's prayers and grief in the days following the incident.

# Scenes from Parish Life at St Pancras

