

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church Soho Square

*Sub auspiciis Sancti Patricii
Patroni nostri gloriosi.*





Archbishop
(now Cardinal)
Vincent Nichols at
the opening of the

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE.
WESTMINSTER. LONDON. SWIP 1QJ

The Diocese of Westminster is blessed with many parishes which have done and continue to do wonderful work in the Lord's vineyard: each has its own character and history. I hope you will enjoy reading about the history and present life of the Parish of St Patrick's in Soho. It was founded in 1792 at a time when the Church in this country was considered suspicious and not necessarily fit to play a part in the affairs of a city like London. There were many difficulties to overcome before St Patrick's was established in a part of the city which was, in those days, a place of considerable Irish immigration, and of squalor. The work of the priests over the years has always been focused on the care for the poor, vulnerable and disenfranchised. Today Soho has a certain colour, but there are real pastoral problems too. London, and particularly its centre, has to the outside world an aura of considerable wealth and influence, but beneath the surface there is a story of human injustice and brokenness. St Patrick's continues to address such needs, as well as being a haven for prayer and for the Eucharistic life celebrated within its walls.

I hope you enjoy reading this book. As you do so, please keep the priests and the people of St Patrick's in your prayer.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ Vincent Nichols

* Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

From temple of folly to house of God

St Patrick's, Soho Square, is one of the oldest post-Reformation Roman Catholic parishes in London, and its chapel the first Catholic place of worship to have opened there after the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791.

In fact, with the exception of Warwick Street's Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, which was originally the Bavarian Embassy chapel, St Patrick's has been one of the longest places of continuing public Catholic worship in London and the Diocese of Westminster.

Roman Catholic associations with the area go even further back, to penal times. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholic martyrs on their way to execution at Tyburn received their last drink in St Giles's, and it was St Giles-in-the-Fields' churchyard that received their bodies.

The last person to have suffered martyrdom in England for the old faith was St Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh. He was executed at Tyburn in 1681 and originally buried at St Giles's.



A relic of the Saint is kept in St Patrick's to this day.

A portrait of St Oliver Plunkett by Edward Lutterell.



The original area of Soho fell outside the immediate city boundary of London. Centuries before, it had been a place where the aristocracy and gentry of the day indulged in various country pursuits. Perhaps most popular was that of hunting. Indeed, the word Soho is a French hunting cry, somewhat akin to Tally Ho.

When Soho was developed in the later seventeenth century, Soho Square was a fashionable and affluent location. In the eighteenth century, the embassies of several Catholic foreign powers were situated here at different times.

While their own churches were still proscribed, Catholics were able to attend Mass in the ambassadors' private chapels. The French Embassy and chapel was situated in Greek Street during the 1730s and the Neapolitan Embassy and chapel occupied 13 Soho Square for a time.

No. 21 Soho Square, on the northern corner with Sutton Street, housed the Spanish Embassy and chapel in the early 1770s, but later became The White House, an unsavoury hotel and high-class brothel.

The origins of St Patrick's site are equally colourful.

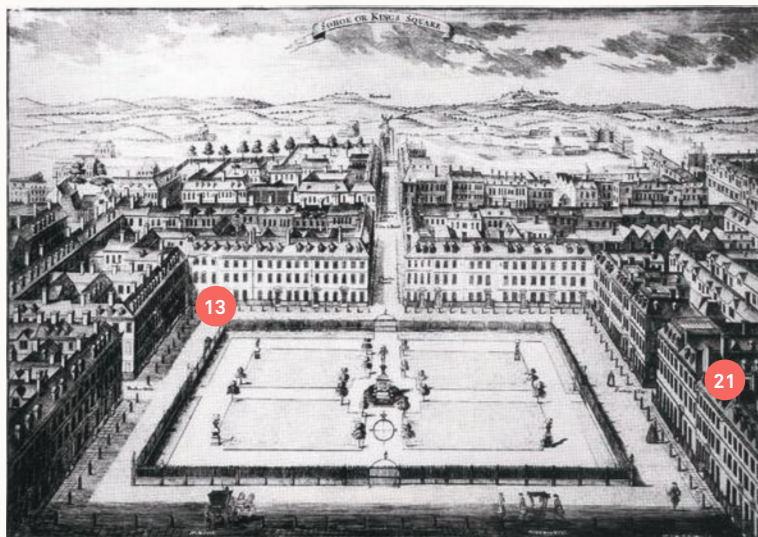
Originally, Carlisle House occupied the site where the church and presbytery now stand, a 'noble mansion' built in 1690 as the London home of the Earl of Carlisle.

Around 1760 it was leased by the notorious Teresa Cornelys, a Venetian adventuress and sometime opera singer, whose former lovers included Casanova, by whom she had a daughter.

Intent on establishing herself as a society hostess, Mrs. Cornelys erected an imposing building comprising two great rooms, one above the other, in the garden alongside Sutton Street. It was a highly successful and exclusive venue for masquerade balls, operas, recitals and a place where fashionable and titled members of London society could indulge themselves, often in the company of foreign royalty and ambassadors.

Allegations of indecent behaviour lent Carlisle House a disreputable air, and Mrs. Cornelys' own reputation and finances went into steep decline after she was fined for staging operas without a licence. Carlisle House struggled to compete with the rival Pantheon assembly rooms, which opened in nearby Oxford Street in 1772. The guests became less select and their conduct became more questionable, leading to robberies and violence.

By 1779 the 'Circe of Soho Square' was in prison for debt and a Mr Hoffmann was managing the entertainments, but with no more success. After an exhibition of monstrosities was held at Carlisle House, a debating club leased the premises. The old mansion was demolished in 1788 and two houses, 21a and 21b Soho Square were built in its place but fortuitously the two large rooms erected at the back, on Sutton Street, remained standing.



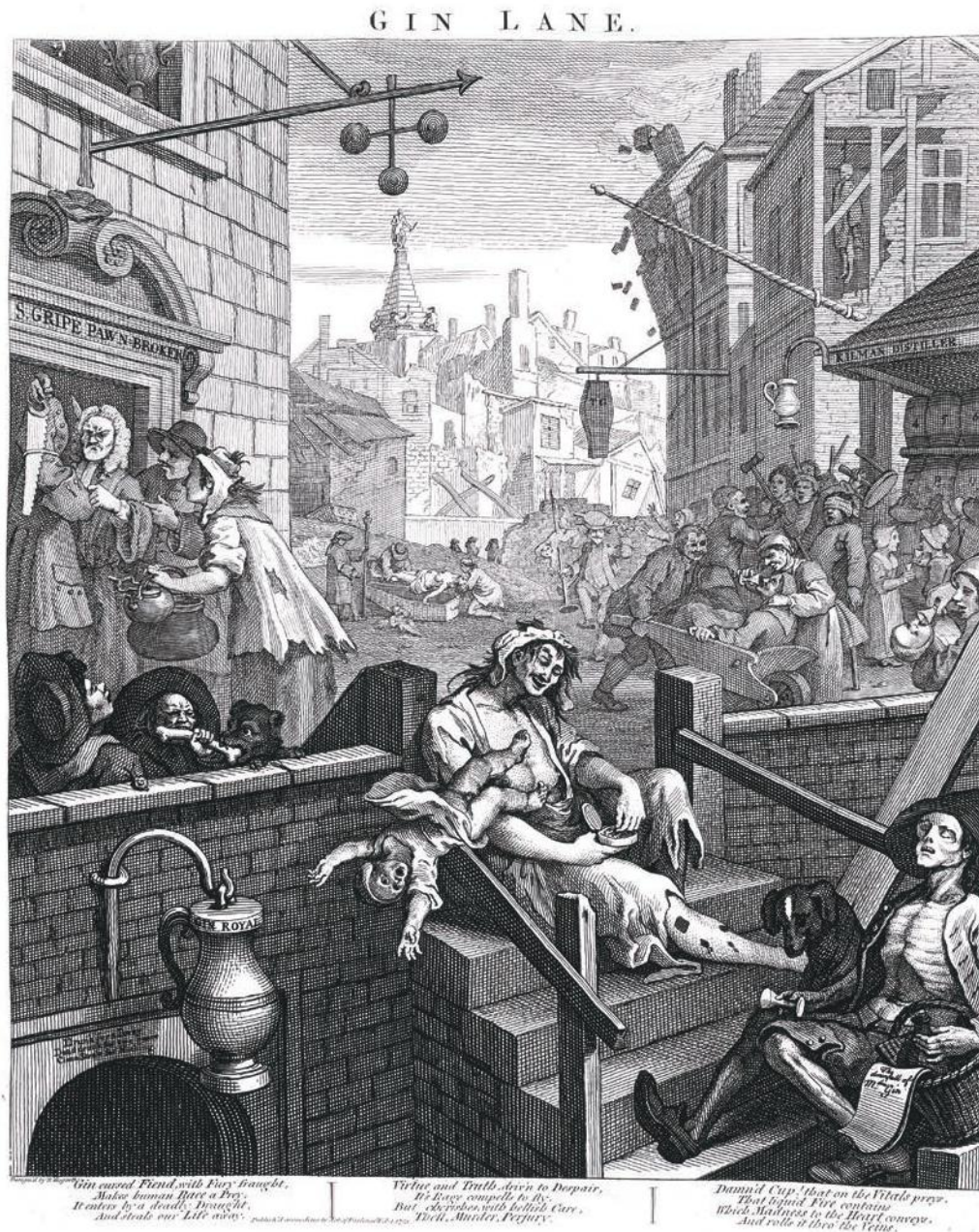
Soho Square in 1757.

No 13
The Neapolitan
Embassy.

No 21
The Spanish Embassy
and Chapel.

This engraving features the masquerade that Mrs Cornelys held on February 6th 1771. The bear-leader and bear were a Mr Hooke and a Mr Hodges, while the coffin was being 'worn' by a Colonel Luttrell, or his brother.





A detail from Hogarth's
1751 print 'Gin Lane'.

The number of Catholics living in the area rose significantly in the eighteenth century. Although the great influx of Irish immigrants had not yet occurred, thousands of Irish already living in London were to be found in and around 'The Rookery' of St Giles's, a wretched slum on the edge of Soho. Often called 'Little Ireland', or 'Little Dublin' it was the filthiest, most squalid place imaginable. The people here were in need in every way, not least of consolation and priests.

In response to their plight, a group of Catholic gentlemen formed the Confraternity of St Patrick in October 1791. Following the passing of the Catholic Relief Act that year, which authorised public places of Catholic worship, their objective was 'to consider of the most effectual means of establishing a chapel to be called St Patrick's, on a liberal and permanent foundation'.

The idea of acquiring the vacant, former entertainment hall built by Mrs. Cornelys behind Carlisle House and converting it into a chapel first occurred to a Mr. Olivier. He proposed as much to George Keating. He was the son of the Catholic publisher who happened to be providing accommodation for a certain Father Arthur O'Leary at his Wardour Street home. A celebrated Irish Franciscan preacher and controversialist, O'Leary was formerly assistant priest to Dr Thomas Hussey, chaplain of the nearby Spanish Embassy.

Dubbed the 'grand precursor of O'Connell', O'Leary was a patriot who nevertheless supported the Union of the Irish and British parliaments, as a means to Catholic emancipation. With the support and encouragement of Bishop John Douglass, the Vicar Apostolic of the London District, he issued a successful appeal to Catholics for funds for the chapel.

Carlisle House by
Thomas Shepherd
1764.





Father Arthur O'Leary, the Irish Franciscan friar who was to prove instrumental in the establishment of St Patrick's. He rallied support for the project, raised funds and fittingly performed the consecration.

A 62-year lease was acquired on the property, and following a comparatively inexpensive conversion, the chapel was solemnly opened on 29 September 1792. Bishop Douglass sung the Mass and Father O'Leary preached the sermon. Father Daniel Gaffey was appointed the nominal and responsible chaplain of the new church. The former temple of folly was the first church in England, at least since the Reformation, to be dedicated to St Patrick. Nevertheless, it was for many years known as 'Father O'Leary's Chapel'.

Little change was made to the outside of Cornelys' building, which remained entirely un-ecclesiastical in appearance. In fact, it was so unobtrusive that visitors sometimes had trouble identifying it. This inconspicuousness was not imprudent. It was established little more than a decade after the Gordon Riots, which saw Catholic embassy chapels and proscribed 'Mass houses' destroyed, and anti-Catholic feeling was still strong.

The two existing entrances on Sutton Street were supplemented by two more, providing access to the different parts of the church. Inside, the two assembly rooms were made into one large, high room by removing the middle of the floor dividing them. To the sides, the flooring was retained to form galleries.

The space for the congregation was arranged very differently to what we are accustomed to today, though it was a common arrangement in other churches of the period. There was no central aisle: in front of the altar rails was a section known as the 'enclosure', with shut-in benches for those who could afford to pay sixpence or a shilling. Regular 'supporters' of the mission occupied seats in the 'tribune', adjacent to the sanctuary. The 'body' of the church for non-paying parishioners was located behind the enclosure and separated from it by a glass screen.



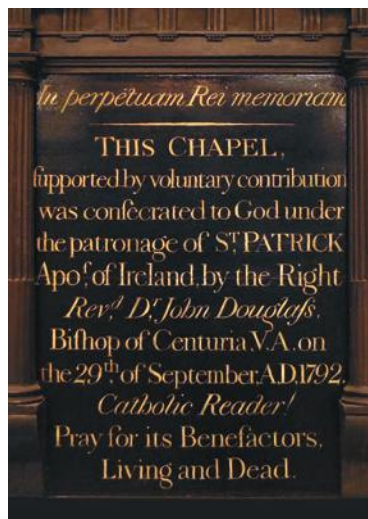
St Patrick's by Thomas Shepherd shortly after its consecration in 1792.

Whilst the priest saying Mass gave Communion to those in the enclosure and tribune at the altar rails, those in the body received Communion from a second priest at a second set of rails. There was no seating in the public 'body' area. Indeed, there was scarcely standing room for the poor who worshipped there. In the galleries, where plain seats were provided, a small charge was made for entry. Children sat either side of the organ in the gallery at the back, the boys one side, and the girls on the other.

The church was plain and unpretentious to begin with. There were no statues, and only one or two pictures beside the altarpiece. A shallow apse had been built, for the high altar, which was fabricated from mahogany, with a painted imitation marble finish. It featured a wooden tabernacle and throne together with carved wooden candlesticks. Four columns framed the altarpiece and above it hung a very fine oil painting of the Crucifixion, by Van Dyck or a pupil. This was generally covered by curtains. Visible above them, as a celebration of the Blessed Trinity, there was a triangle surrounded by gilt rays and bearing the name of God in Hebrew.

The painted wooden pulpit, surmounted by a sounding board, was octagonal in form. Raised up on a slender pillar, it was reached by a twisting, mahogany staircase. There were three confessionals situated under the stairs leading to the gallery at the west end of the church. A fourth, under the sacristy, was probably provided for worshippers in the enclosure and tribune.

The splendid organ, topped by a carved gilt harp, was built in 1793 by Robert and William Gray at a cost of £262 10s. A 1794 inventory describes the instrument as 'a capital organ, long octaves in a mahogany case. Two sets of keys, great organ and swell, and one octave of double diapason pipes'. The double diapason is believed to be the first in an English organ. A Madame Meroir was the first organist engaged - at £21 per annum, to play morning and evening and to teach a group of boys plainchant. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, her footsteps were followed by no less a figure than Vincent Novello, the famous musician, composer and music publisher.



A wall plate commemorating the consecration of the church on 29th September 1792.

An early interior view of the church. The central area of the building's first floor was removed to form balconies.





Pius VI died in exile in France. In 1799 his requiem Mass held in St Patrick's was attended by hundreds of displaced French clergy.

In its very first year, the church was the scene of an extraordinary sight - the arrival of hundreds of French clergy. Having fled persecution following the Revolution, they would assemble at St Patrick's for retreats given by the esteemed preacher, Père Beauregard. Several years later, on November 16th 1799, the church attracted a similarly impressive continental audience. Pope Pius VI had died a prisoner in Republican France and the papal envoy to Great Britain, Monseigneur (later to be Cardinal) Erskine chose St Patrick's for the pontiff's official requiem.

It was celebrated by Bishop Douglass who later described it as being "... a solemn dirge, mass and the five Absolutions held in St. Patrick's Chapel for the repose of His Holiness's soul. The whole chapel was draped in black except the columns of the altar (the capitals of which were covered) and the organ. The highest windows were left uncovered. Over these, as also along the rails of the galleries, under the lights, hung various mottoes."

The mass itself was performed "in a manner most solemn, awful, and impressive. The Bishops of Montpellier, Rodez, Lombez and Waterford assisted in mitres and black copes at the five Absolutions. The foreign ministers with their families were present, the Duchess of Devonshire, the French Bishops and a very crowded assembly." The service began at ten in the morning and finished at the half past three in the afternoon, with Father O'Leary delivering a stirring funeral oration from the pulpit wearing only "a black cassock, with no surplice and no stole".

O'Leary himself was to die just a few years later in January 1802, aged seventy-two. His was to be another remarkable requiem with two thousand mourners attending the mass at St Patrick's. A mural monument celebrating his 'useful labours in the vineyard of the Lord' was erected when he was initially buried in the churchyard at St Pancras. His remains were later moved to St Mary's Cemetery in Kensal Green, where his friend the Earl of Moira had arranged for a memorial in his honour.



An unattributed portrait of Cardinal Erskine, the papal envoy who arranged and paid for the Pope's requiem mass.

From prayer to care

During its early years, a committee of laymen managed the parish. But after twenty years, the committee could no longer finance the mission, and in 1813 handed over responsibility to Bishop William Poynter. The rector, successor to Fr Gaffey, was Fr Edward Norris. The number of parishioners at this time was estimated to be between seven and eight thousand souls.

The congregation of St Patrick's was not exclusively poor. Soho and the Square were no longer a fashionable area but there were well-to-do Catholics in the district and in Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia. But most parishioners were indeed poor and Irish.

Although the most densely crowded part of St Giles' Rookery was demolished in the 1840s to improve the area and make way for New Oxford Street, the number of very poor Catholics then numbered upwards of ten thousand, as a result of immigration following the Irish potato famine. Most lived in the part of the Rookery that remained, south of New Oxford Street around Church Lane, until this too was demolished later in the century.

The Rookery was dangerous, yet the faithful there were numerous, and St Patrick's priests willingly entered. Making their rounds they met with respect and affection, and exercised an authority in the slums that no constable could expect.



An 1803 portrait of Bishop William Poynter by James Ramsey.

An illustration of 'The Rookery' St. Giles's circa 1850 by Edward Walford.



The Rookery was not the only part of the parish blighted by poverty. The area around Seven Dials was also a slum, populated by a mix of Irish and English families. The alleys and courts in the vicinity of Crown Street (today Charing Cross Road) were one of the “very worst places”. Newport Market was also described as being “singularly destitute”.

However, the houses around New Compton Street were inhabited by Irish Catholics who were merely ‘somewhat poor’, many of them working as street traders. The Catholics in the west of the parish included artisans, as well as labourers.

The good shepherds of St Patrick’s spent a great deal of their time visiting the sick, of whom there were always many, owing to the unsanitary conditions, the overcrowding and the overall hardship experienced by so many of their flock. Tuberculosis was endemic and there were outbreaks of cholera as well as smallpox.

There were sober, pious and hard-working men and women living in the slums but alcoholism and drunkenness were rampant. Men drank and brawled and many of them beat their wives. Not that some of the women were any better. When the priests gave clothing or boots to children, their parents often pawned them and squandered the proceeds. When children were neglected by their parents, the priests regularly stepped in to supervise their care by neighbours, until conditions at home had improved.

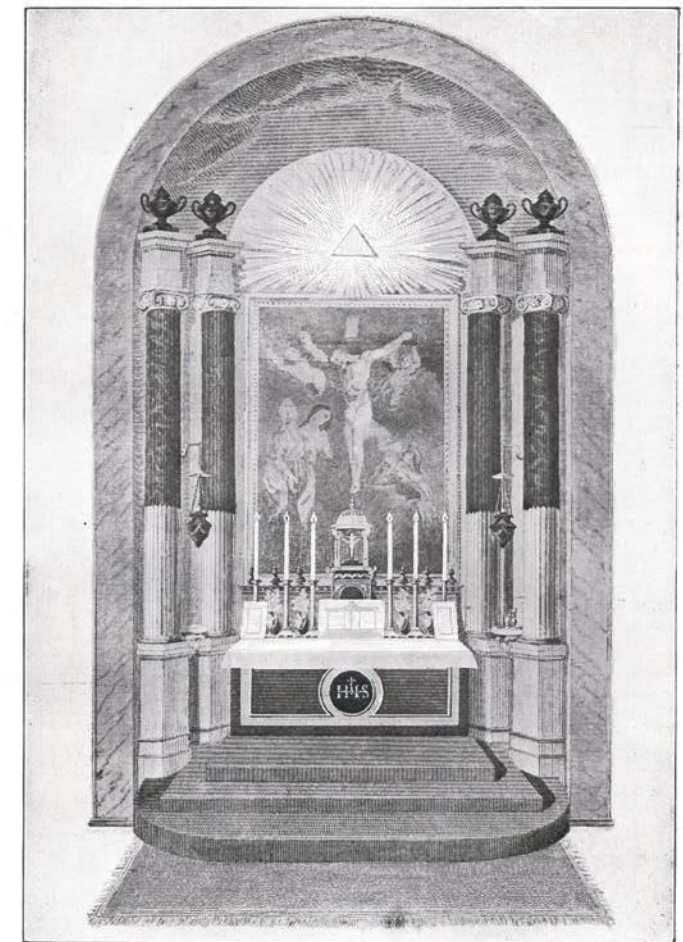


Father Thomas Barge
who joined St Patrick’s as
a curate and later returned
as rector

Father Thomas Barge, who had joined St Patrick’s as a curate in 1847, returned to succeed Canon Thomas Long as rector in 1860. On seeing the conditions around the parish, he made great efforts to remedy the many ills. He formed societies that encouraged parishioners to agree to abstain wholly or partially from drink, with pledges administered in the church. He also instituted a penny bank. Deposits and payments were collected after evening service on Sundays with the aim of encouraging thrift and reducing spending on alcohol.

When Father Barge died in October 1885, having laboured amongst Soho’s ‘God’s beloved poor’ for nearly forty years, he earned a glowing obituary in The Tablet. He was fondly remembered not only for his pastoral care and zeal, but also his having been “always anxious that his people should enter into and enjoy the services of his church, which were marked by much heartiness and simplicity”. His requiem Mass saw St Patrick’s once again filled to capacity and Soho Square, as well as Sutton Street, thronged with mourners.

An illustration of
the High Altar as it
appeared in 1816.



One of the most important tasks and achievements of the parish in the nineteenth century was the provision of schools for the advancement and education of its poor children. The First, St Patrick's Charity School in Frith Street, opened in 1803 with around a hundred pupils.

The whole school relocated to Denmark Street in 1804 but divided in 1811. A girl's school was established, together with an orphanage for both sexes, the boy pupils having been moved to a property in Dean Street. Together, they catered for over four hundred youngsters.

By the 1820s the girls' school was occupying premises in Charlotte Street, as well as Thorney Street in Bloomsbury. Then, around 1833, the girls and boys schools were re-united in Tudor Place, off Tottenham Court Road.

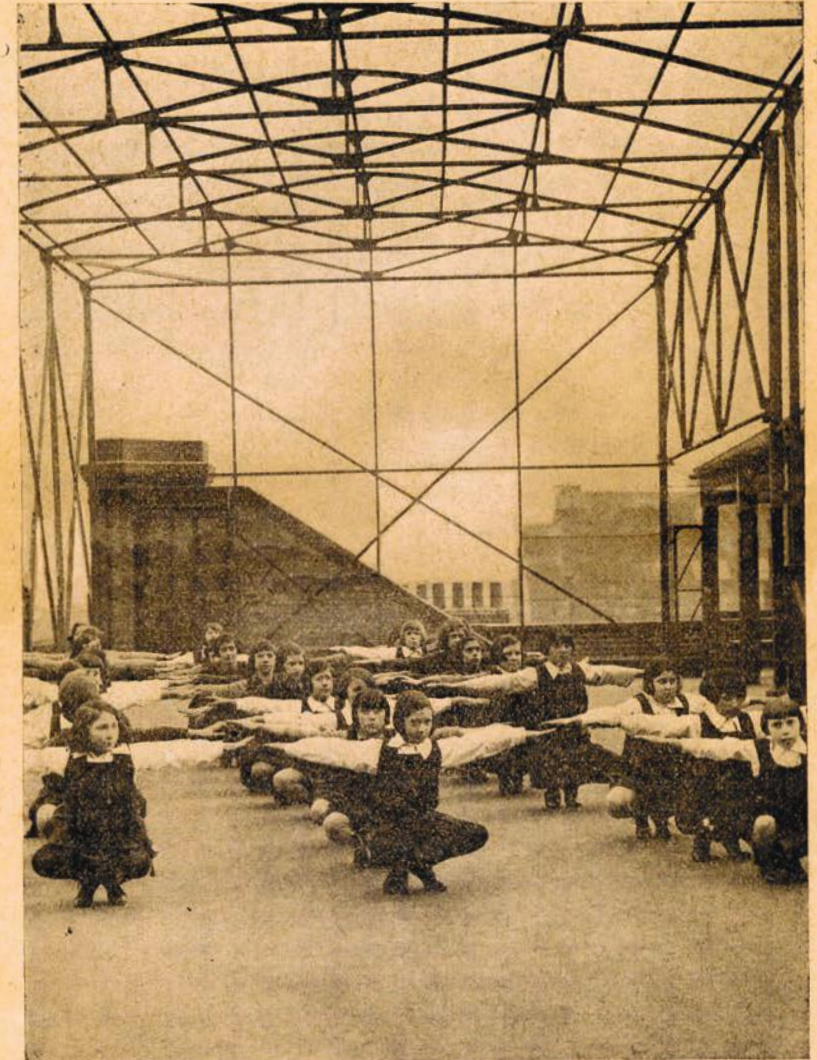
In addition to the core Charity School, a number of smaller, auxiliary schools were opened over the years to increase the number of places available for infants. These included St Francis Xavier's in George Street, St Giles which later moved to Seven Dials, together with St Agnes's in Denmark Street, which later moved to Greek Street, plus St Joseph's in Pancras Street, off Tottenham Court Road. Another St Joseph's being sited rather unfortunately in above a shellfish merchant and overlooking a slaughterhouse in Newport Market's Princes Row.

From 1826, members of the Irish Christian Brothers taught the boys. St Patrick's being the first school in England to invite them to teach here. Another order dedicated to teaching the poor, the Marist Brothers, took over from them in 1865. The girls' school was run by a lay mistress, with the help of several younger assistants and the part-time attendance of the Sisters of Mercy.

The parish priests and curates of St Patrick's derived great satisfaction and pride from the schools and devoted a lot of energy to them, visiting daily to monitor education and attendance as well as give religious instruction.

Father Barge was particularly dedicated, with the girl's school under his direct supervision. When infirmity prevented him from attending the schools, he had classes sent to the presbytery and gave religious instruction and lessons in the dining room.

Devotion to the poor children of Soho was not without its perils. In tending their flock, St Patrick's priests had not only to contend with 'the smell of the sheep', they also attracted their lice! Father Barge used to call them "signs of apostolicity" as the teachers and priests diligently picked the uninvited guests from one another's clothes.



Girl pupils enjoying a physical exercise class on the school roof in 1910.

By 1870 there were places for eight hundred children in all. When the Tudor Place lease expired in 1888, all schooling was moved into new buildings in Great Chapel Street, off Oxford Street. Despite many of the children being undernourished, badly clothed, shoeless and lousy, both boys' and girls' schools achieved very high standards of learning and discipline.

In the years before grant-aid was available, the schools depended for their income on subscriptions, donations and collections. For many years, the parish was fortunate to enjoy the patronage of HRH the Duke of Sussex and Daniel O'Connell, the prominent Irish politician.

St Patrick's congregation decreased in the later Victorian period. This was partly due to the establishment of two new Catholic churches, each of them no more than a half a mile away. 1863 saw the opening of St Charles Borromeo on Ogle Street which absorbed a northern portion of the parish, while 1868 saw the opening of Notre Dame de France on Leicester Square, serving the large French community to the south of Soho.

In truth, the reduction in numbers was mostly due to the general fall in Soho's population. The demolition of the slums and the introduction of laws against overcrowding reduced the amount of accommodation, forcing many of the poor to leave the area. Most of the Irish moved out to Bayswater and Paddington. Nonetheless, St Patrick's was still regarded as an 'Irish chapel' and the patronal feast was observed with as much splendour and solemnity as it ever had been. By 1890 the congregation was approaching three thousand.

①. Complete Set of Pulls
coloring blocks herewith.
Cust.



A school dormitory.



The boys' boxing team.



A school classroom.

Leading bishops of the day, including Cardinals Wiseman and Manning, frequently preached at St Patrick's, advocating the cause of charity. But one of the most significant Catholic figures associated with Soho in the nineteenth-century was Mother Magdalen Taylor.

Mother Magdalen was received into the Catholic Church while serving as one of Florence Nightingale's volunteer nurses during the Crimean War. She had been inspired by the faith of the Irish soldiers there and the dedication of the Irish Sisters of Mercy among the sick and wounded.

On her return to London, Mother Magdalen's work on behalf of the poor was exemplary. Under the direction of her friend, Cardinal Manning and with his encouragement, she established her own religious congregation, the Poor Servants of the Mother of God. Officially founded in 1872, it remains one of the few Catholic movements to have been founded by an English man or woman.

Another famous nurse of the Crimean War, Mary Seacole, who also went on to convert to Catholicism, was also a parishioner. She lived for a time at 14 Soho Square, where a blue plaque now commemorates her residence.

In their early years, the Poor Servants work was focused on the slums of Soho and central London, visiting and nursing the poor, rescuing women from prostitution, and teaching in parish schools.



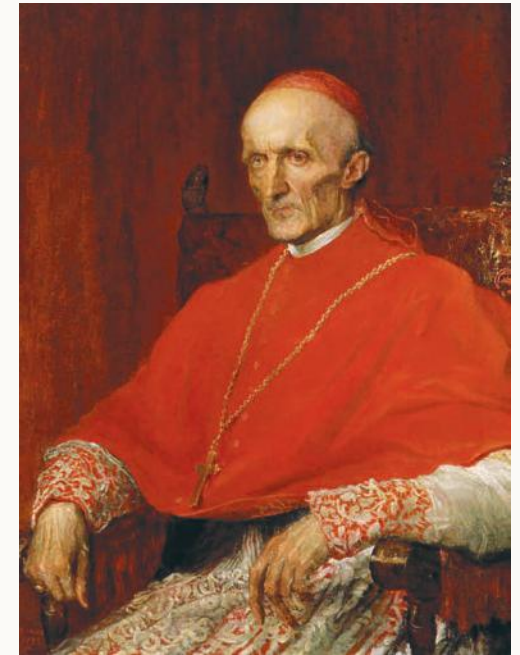
Born Frances Taylor, the daughter of an Anglican clergyman, Mother Magdalen was received into the Catholic Church while serving as one of Florence Nightingale's volunteer nurses during the Crimean War.

The congregation opened the Convent of Our Lady of Pity in 1875 on Princes Row in Newport Market.

Later based in Little Pulteney Street and Percy Street, the sisters established a home for fallen women. In 1897 the convent moved to 31 Soho Square, opposite St Patrick's church, where a further refuge was opened. It was here that Mother Magdalen died, on 9 June 1900, after returning ill from a pilgrimage in France.

By the time of her death, the Poor Servants administered more than twenty convents and institutions in Britain and Ireland, as well as convents in Rome and Paris. Today, the congregation continues the mission begun by Mother Magdalen in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, the United States, Venezuela, and Kenya. Cardinal Basil Hume opened the cause for the beatification and canonisation of Mother Magdalen in 1982. In June 2014, Pope Francis declared her to be 'Venerable', the second stage on the way to being recognised as a saint.

The convent and refuge in Soho Square are long gone. When its lease expired, the Convent of Our Lady of Pity transferred to Gordon Square in 1913 and after the Second World War it moved to Euston Square. Despite its move, the Congregation of the Poor Servants retains close links with St Patrick's and their Sister Mary Kenefick SMG is the Parish Sister.



Cardinal Manning who helped Mother Magdalen to establish the 'Poor Servants of the Mother of God'.

The original chapel was improved and embellished over the course of time. A sermon preached to raise funds for repairs and redecoration of the church in June 1815 threatened parishioners who refused to respond generously to the minister's solicitations with "the avenging arm of slighted omnipotence". It also warned that the souls of the niggardly would be consigned "to the torturous lake of unconsuming fire." According to The Catholic Spectator, the sermon 'procured a most handsome contribution'.

In 1840 seating was provided in the body of the church, although the original divisions of the nave - tribune, enclosure and body - were retained throughout the building's history. The middle of the century also saw the somewhat intimidating glass screen that separated the enclosure and body was removed and replaced by the wooden rail that had served as the second altar rail.

Most of the improvements to the interior were made under Father Barge, who sought to furnish the ugly building as well as his means would allow, believing that nothing was too good for the service of God.

In 1873 a small sanctuary in honour of the Sacred Heart was established. It featured a white, marble-fronted altar and a painted wooden statue of the Sacred Heart by Mayer & Co.

The old wooden high altar was succeeded by one of marble and stone and its wooden tabernacle and throne replaced by a tabernacle of iron and brass. The carved wooden candlesticks were also replaced by brass ones and two large statues of St Joseph and St Patrick were placed in the sanctuary.



An early exterior photograph of the old chapel circa 1890.

The most prominent addition made by Barge was the alabaster Altar of Our Lady of the Seven Dolours (Our Lady of Sorrows). Situated just under the gallery on the Gospel side of the church, opposite the pulpit, it boasted a fine plaster model of the Pietà. Created by the celebrated Victorian sculptor, Theodore Phyffers, it cost a princely £40. One of the pillars bears a painting of the Mater Dolorosa, attributed to Carlo Dolci, while the other features an antique ivory Spanish Crucifix.

Outside, the entrances on Sutton Street were fitted with wooden porches and the presbytery was relocated. Up until the middle of the century, St Patrick's clergy were living in Dean Street, but by the 1860s they had been moved to No 13 on the northern side of Soho Square. This building had been the site of the Neapolitan Embassy and chapel and remains standing to this day.

In 1868 the presbytery was relocated again to 21a Soho Square, on the corner of Sutton Street, the very site of the campanile and narthex of the present church. Father Barge having had the foresight to purchase the building and its neighbour 21b, together with the freehold of the church building, when all their leases ended in 1865.



A fine plaster study of the Pietà by the celebrated Victorian sculptor, Theodore Phyffers.

A new church for a new century

While improvements were made to the original church, it was long hoped to replace it with a newly built, more handsome and impressive building.



in the 1850s, Canon Thomas Long began raising money towards the purchase of a new site and the erection of a new church, with designs prepared by Pugin and Wardell. As suitable land was deemed unobtainable, the plan was abandoned.

However, Father Barge's fortuitous purchase of the freehold of St Patrick's and the adjoining houses on Soho Square made the raising of a new church on the existing site a practical possibility.

Unfortunately, almost twenty years passed before sufficient funds were available for the rebuilding work and it would be Father Barge's successor, Canon Langton Vere, who oversaw it. Ironically, as a young priest he had actually begun his ministry at St Patrick's. From 1868 he had served as third curate under Father Barge and spent the first five and a half years of his priesthood here.

By the time of his return to the parish, the old chapel had become so unsafe that its reconstruction was not only desirable, but also very necessary.

Although Cornelys' assembly rooms had been well built, their conversion into a chapel by cutting away the central portion the first floor had resulted in the heavy roof thrusting the side walls outwards.

A 1919 sketch of the
South Eastern corner of
Soho Square.

Canon Langton
Vere who oversaw
the construction of the
new church.



The design was entrusted to the accomplished church architect, John Kelly, of Kelly & Birchall, a firm that specialised in Italianate and Gothic Revival style churches. The builder was W. H. Gaze of Kingston-upon-Thames.

To create additional ground space and accommodate Kelly's design, the adjoining 21a Soho Square, which had housed the presbytery, was demolished along with the old chapel. The presbytery was moved next door to 21b, which was then renumbered 21a.

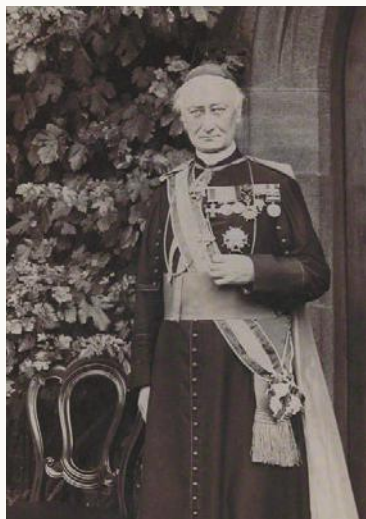
The foundation stone of the new church was laid on 18 June 1891 and it opened its doors on St Patrick's Day, 1893. Bishop Robert Brindle DSO carried out its consecration on 20 September 1900. He was not only an eminent cleric but also an accomplished military clergyman who had been decorated for his service with Kitchener and served as Roman Catholic chaplain of the Royal Irish Regiment in Egypt and the Sudan.

Kelly's new church, built in the Italian Renaissance style utterly transformed the site. The main entrance at the corner of Soho Square comprises a portico in Portland stone, with Corinthian columns and pilasters, and the Papal tiara and keys set into the pediment. This forms the base of the imposing 125-feet high campanile that rises in arcaded stages.

The tower, the main body of the church and the narthex are built in red brick. A blind arcade forms the north wall of the nave along Sutton Street (now Sutton Row) with a clerestory and another blind arcade above.

Kelly skillfully planned the interior to make the fullest use of the available space. The octagonal vestibule at the bottom of the campanile, and the antechapel beyond it, occupy the entire width of the old presbytery.

Robert Brindle DSO
Bishop of Nottingham.



The church tower
features a niche
that houses a statue
of St Patrick by
Boulton & Sons.

The Eastern façade of
Soho Square in 1840.



The Eastern façade of
Soho Square in 1918.



From there the church broadens out with its elegant, light and airy nave. The nave is aisle-less, but round-headed arches separated by tall Corinthian pilasters, form shallow recesses or bays along the sides. These accommodate a series of side chapels and shrines as well as the confessionals. Only one of the side chapels is built out, then the domed Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel. This was situated on the south side, nearest the sanctuary.

Above the arches and the cornice, the plain-glassed clerestory runs along the north and south sides of the nave as well as the west end wall over the gallery. The west wall also features a large, round window. The barrel-vaulted ceiling is coffered. The nave ends in an apsidal sanctuary, the two separated by marble altar rails with intricately carved, pierced panels.

The high altar is constructed in white marble with amber marble panels and the tabernacle originally sat below a tall exposition throne. The two tiers of the apse wall, above and below the cornice, are ornamented with Corinthian pilasters.

When the church opened, large textile panels in subdued colours filled the entire apse wall between the pilasters, but a marble panelled dado was later installed around the lower wall of the apse. The arch and domed ceiling of the sanctuary are ribbed and panelled, in the same manner as the nave.

When it was pulled down, many fittings from the old church were given to poor missions but much was retained and reused. As well as being practical, this also provided parishioners with a welcome sense of continuity between the old and new churches.

The iron and brass tabernacle was adapted to the new high altar and the gilt rays that had been above the old high altar placed above the throne. The original Gray organ had been rebuilt by Hill in 1882 and this was installed on the left of the sanctuary.



1896 photographs of the interior views to the altar and the rear gallery.

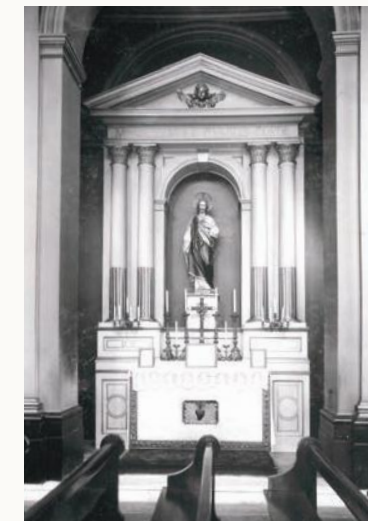
The Stations of the Cross from the old chapel were re-erected in the nave. The former high altar was used in the Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel. After several years of much-needed restoration owing to the ill effects of dirt and smoke, the magnificent altarpiece of the Crucifixion joined it.

Phyffers's Pietà and the Mater Dolorosa attributed to Dolci were sited in the same chapel, and a relic of St Oliver Plunkett was placed in a niche on the right.

Beside this chapel, the existing Renaissance-style Sacred Heart altar and statue were set in a new Sacred Heart Chapel. The earlier statue dates back to 1873 and the old Chapel. It depicts Christ as he had appeared in a vision to St Margaret Mary, a 17th century French nun, and dramatizes the piercing of Christ's side with a lance during the Crucifixion. The four wooden pillars with Egyptian capitals that support its triangular pediment had originally supported the front of the organ gallery.

To the right was St Joseph's Chapel featuring a then contemporary oil painting of St Joseph and the child Jesus framed by red marble columns.

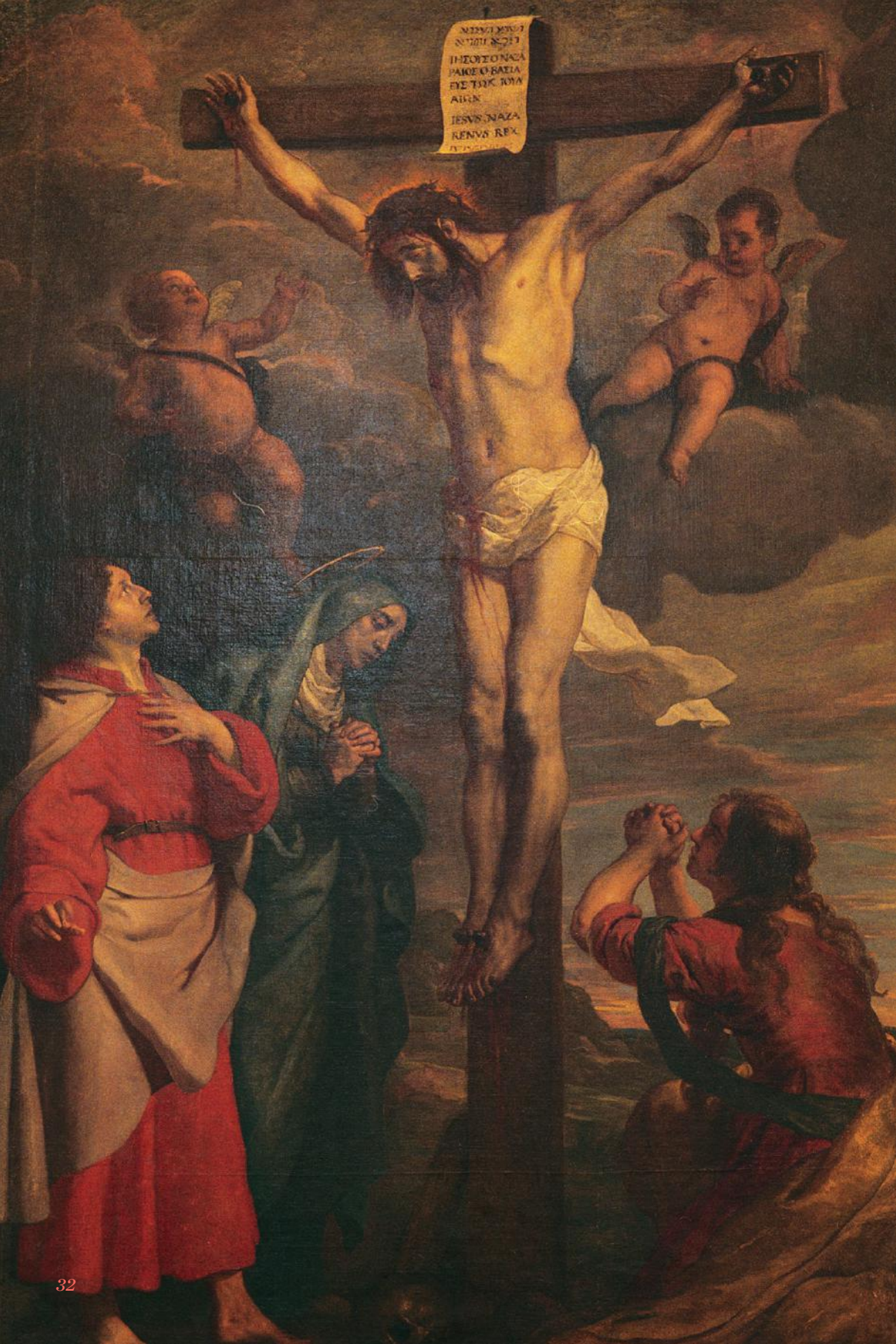
The alabaster, diapered side altar in the Chapel of Saints Martha and Mary came from the earlier Lady of Sorrows chapel. The four wooden columns with Ionic capitals that support its arch also demonstrate the architect's skill at recycling – they had previously formed part of the high altar. Below it there is a large oil painting of Jesus with the two saints, who had provided him with lodging in Bethany.



The Sacred Heart statue from the old church was re-sited in a new side chapel.

On the right, the original Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel.





This fine oil painting of the Crucifixion originally graced the old chapel.

It dates back to around 1650 and is said to be the work of a pupil of Van Dyke.

The Our lady of Lourdes chapel.

The pulpit with its later mahogany additions.

The elaborate, neo-Renaissance Carrara marble altar in Our Lady of Lourdes' Chapel, at the west end of the nave on the south side, was donated to the church in 1892 as was the statue that occupies the central niche. It portrays the Virgin Mary as she had appeared to St Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858, less than 40 years earlier.

On the north side of the nave, the new pulpit initially consisted of only the marble stand and steps. The carved Renaissance-style mahogany sounding board and backboard were added to it a decade or so after the church was completed.

The attractive mahogany confessionals in the third and fifth left-hand recesses were made for the new church. The second recess received a fine, gilded wooden altar dedicated to the Mother of God, with a small statue of Mary holding the infant Jesus, dating from the late eighteenth century. Its altar table, the mahogany gradine and reredos and fixed tabernacle are believed to have been sourced from another Roman Catholic chapel of that period.

Panelled doors in the bay between the confessionals form a side entrance to what is now Sutton Row and originally these were fitted with an internal wooden porch.





The mural monument recording the church's debt to Fr O'Leary.

An 18th Century Pietà in Carrara Marble.

Within the vestibule, an eighteenth-century Carrara marble Pietà, featuring an angel holding the body of Christ and incorporating a stoup in its plinth, was installed in an alcove on the right. On the left, a plaque was erected to the 'oldest mission in England dedicated to St Patrick' in commemoration of the opening and consecration of the new church in 1893. The tablet recording the opening of old St Patrick's in 1792 was placed on the stairs leading to the Sodality Chapel.

The large mural memorial dedicated to the memory of Fr O'Leary, with his portrait carved in relief, was re-erected in the antechapel on the right, with a font placed before it. Its marble basin with gadrooned sides set on a stone plinth date back to the eighteenth-century and was probably retrieved from the old church.

The new church also received several old pre-Reformation Catholic vestments - chasubles that were once used in the private chapel of St Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII. Today, some five hundred years later, with their original embroidery and orphreys now restored, they are still worn on special occasions.



Pre-Reformation vestments that date back to the private chapel of St Catherine of Aragon.

The changing needs of a challenging parish

Notwithstanding all the alterations and additions to the church fabric, the most profound change experienced by St Patrick's since it was rebuilt has been demographic. After rising and falling throughout the nineteenth century, the congregation grew again to around six thousand towards its end.



Soho had always enjoyed a very cosmopolitan flavour, as evidenced by the naming of nearby Greek Street, the French hospital and the French Protestant and Catholic Churches. But as the twentieth century approached, the church and the area of Soho began to welcome wave after wave of immigrants from Continental Europe, in particular the Italians.

Disenfranchised by the unification of Italy and impressed by the riches of the Victorian gentry they saw on 'The Grand Tour', hundreds of Italians came to London. Many of them arrived on foot, with no more than the clothes they stood up in.

Like the Irish before them, on becoming successful, the Italians moved out of the area, but the chapel next to the sanctuary in the easternmost left-hand bay of the church bears witness to their patronage.

Dedicated to the Italian St John Bosco, the great educator and founder of the Salesian order, its white, amber and pink marble altar features a statue group depicting the priest with two pupils. Carved by Anton Dapre of Burns, Oates & Washbourne the figures are based on two Italian boys from St. Patrick's School and their toy building is a scale model of the church itself.

A photograph showing
St Patrick's in 1930.

The altar to the great
educator St John Bosco.

The two boys were
Italian pupils of St
Patrick's school.



As the century progressed, St Patrick's was subject to two other notable arrivals from overseas.

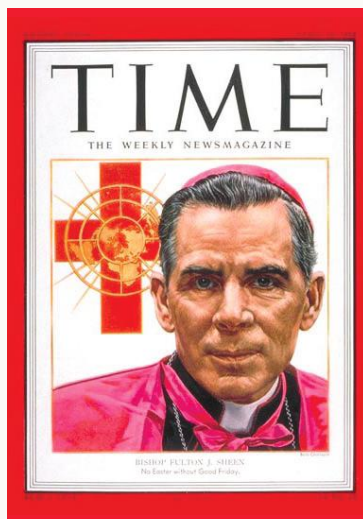
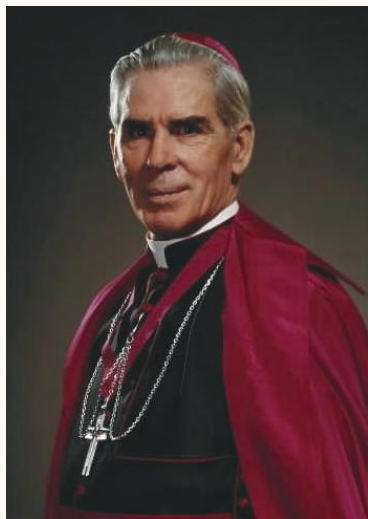
The first was the Venerable Fulton Sheen, one of the most remarkable and holy individuals to be associated with the parish and a priest especially well known and remembered in his native United States.

He began preaching on the radio there during the 1930s. Then as a bishop, presented hugely popular television programmes. He was one of the first 'televangelists' and twice received an Emmy award for his broadcasts. He was credited with numerous conversions and latterly inspired the stage name adopted by the acclaimed Catholic actor and human rights activist Martin Sheen (real name, Ramón Estévez).

As a young priest in the 1920s while he was in England teaching theology at St Edmund's College, Ware (the diocesan seminary, afterwards Allen Hall), Sheen served as a curate at St Patrick's, where he was very well received. When he went back to the United States to teach at the Catholic University in Washington, he returned to the parish each summer for six or seven years, serving as curate at St Patrick's whilst researching at the nearby British Museum.

A famous story recounted by Sheen about his time here involved a young woman he found drunk in the doorway of the church one morning, who did not know where she was. Having brought her in for a cup of tea, the woman told Sheen she was a lapsed Catholic, and had turned to drink because she was involved with three men. Recognizing her as the leading actress in a musical, Sheen invited her to return in the afternoon before the matinee for a further chat and to see the paintings in the church. The actress agreed on condition that he would not ask her to go to confession, which Sheen promised he would not.

The Venerable Fulton Sheen



His work as a television evangelist won him international fame.

She returned, and as they were walking along the side of the church past one of the confessionals, Sheen kept his promise not to ask, but simply pushed her in! Whatever her first reaction was, she stayed and made a full confession. Two years later she took the veil and entered the community of nuns at Tyburn.

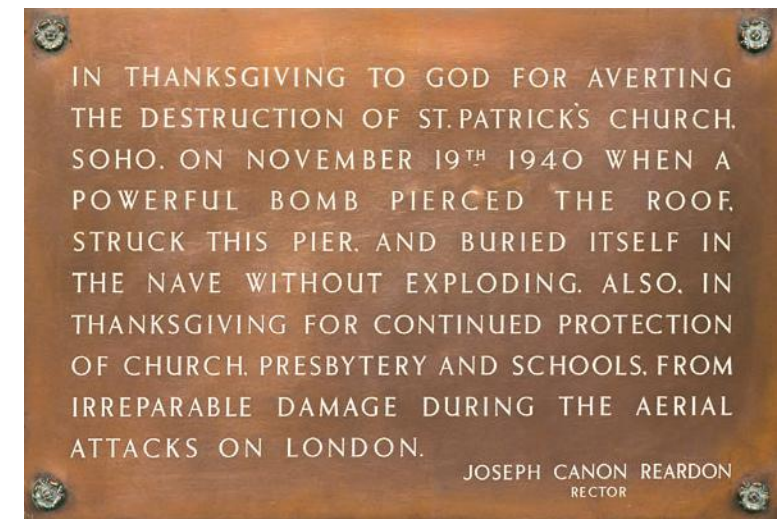
Although he referred to Soho as a 'hell hole', Sheen was immensely fond of the parish. He maintained a lifelong connection with it, visiting whenever he returned to London and joking that he continued as the 'unofficial curate of St Patrick's' ever after.

Archbishop Sheen died in 1979. The cause for his canonisation was opened in 2002, and he has been recognised as a Venerable Servant of God since 2012.

The other notable overseas arrival was a rather less welcome one.

On the 19 November 1940, during the Blitz, a high-explosive bomb penetrated the church roof, struck the fourth pier on the south side of the nave and buried itself in the floor, but thankfully failed to detonate.

After the war, the rector, Canon Joseph Reardon, erected a brass plaque in thanksgiving to God for preserving St Patrick's, its presbytery and schools from destruction.



Various alterations were made to Kelly's church during the century after it was built. The old Stations of the Cross were replaced by ones in cast relief. The former high altar was moved to the Our Lady of Sorrows chapel.

The 1920s saw the antechapel and altar to St Anthony of Padua established. Born in Portugal at the end of the 12th Century, shortly after St Francis of Assisi himself, this celebrated early Franciscan friar preached against heresy in both France and Italy. The saint's statue is flanked by a painted panels by Gilbert Pownall.

In 1930 the bay below the gallery on the south side became the baptistry, with a white marble side altar dedicated to St John the Baptist and a contemporary stained-glass window depicting the Baptism of Christ.

In the apse, a mosaic of St Patrick trampling a serpent was installed in a central position above the cornice.

In the 1960s, in response to the reforms following the Second Vatican Council, the high altar was adapted from the mensa of the original and brought forward to a lower position, leaving the reredos in situ, minus its throne which had already been removed a decade earlier.

The grand Crucifixion altarpiece, which had once graced the apse in the old church, was taken from Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel and hung on the wall above it. Statues of Mary and St Joseph were also placed either side of the entrance to the sanctuary.

The altar in this chapel was removed in the 1970s and paintings added, including a copy of Murillo's Mater Dolorosa, which is today sited at the back of the church, below the gallery.

The 1930s baptistry altar dedicated to St John the Baptist.



A stained glass panel depicting the baptism of Christ.



The church interior and altar arrangement in 1957.

The revised interior following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.



The veneration of Our Lady of Sorrows was transferred to the recess on the north side below the gallery, and Phyffers's Pietà moved there. The stained glass here, a memorial to parishioner Margaret Green who died in 1923, represents St Margaret on the left and St Patrick on the right.

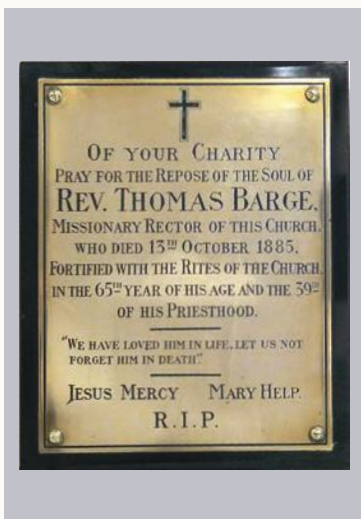
The eighteenth-century Marian altar on the north side of the nave was moved to the second recess there and rededicated to St Thérèse of Lisieux following her canonisation in 1925.

A plaque commemorating the life and work of Father Barge from the old church was set up on the left of the nave entrance. Several pictures hung in the north bays included a seventeenth-century painting of the Italian school, depicting Simeon and Anna adoring the Blessed Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus; a representation of Joseph's dream; and a study of the Descent from the Cross.

The eighteenth-century font was moved to the vestibule. The ornate cast-iron lamp in the vestibule was presented in memory of parishioner J.Pecorini following his death in 1929.

As the new millennium approached, both the number of parishioners and Soho's population continued to decline steadily. Offices replaced homes and increasing affluence coaxed residents to less built-up districts and the suburbs.

By the 1960s the roll of St Patrick's School had fallen below ninety, a far cry from the eight hundred children under the church's care a hundred years before. In 1967, with many of the pupils travelling in from other parts of London, the school was relocated to Kentish Town where there was more demand for Catholic primary places.



The Plaque celebrating the life and work of Fr Barge.

Fr Garvey became the eleventh rector to be formally recorded.

There were fewer than a hundred Catholics resident in the parish and today there is only a handful. The many hundreds of Catholics who continue to attend St Patrick's are mostly visitors and tourists and people working in the area.

The church continued to attract immigrants and migrant workers from all across the capital. So much so, that Fr Austin Garvey, the rector at the close of the twentieth century, opened a language school in the former primary school building in Great Chapel Street, to aid the integration and improve the skills of non-native English speakers.

A keen ecumenist, Fr Garvey showed great concern for the multi-lingual and ethnic community during his twenty-year tenure, a concern that is maintained at St Patrick's to this day, with Mass regularly being celebrated in both Spanish and Portuguese.

A handsome pair of life-sized angels holding holy water stoups were installed under the gallery at the entrance to the nave.

Carved by Mayer & Co in 1875 from Carrara marble they came to St Patrick's from St Mary Moorfields in 1966.



A new millennium greeted by restoration and renewal.

St Patrick's has always provided for those suffering material or spiritual impoverishment, or both. For all the glamour of the West End and despite London being one of the richest cities in the world, Soho remains home to some of the most marginalised in society. So St Patrick's service to the poor and vulnerable continues.

With the arrival of Fr Alexander Sherbrooke as parish priest in 2001, the good works of the parish on behalf of the homeless and those suffering from addiction were formalised and extended. But for practical reasons there was only so much that could be achieved in the church as it stood.

By the new millennium, the building was in need of repair and refurbishment. The interior surfaces were damaged and soiled from a century of regular use and pollution. The paintwork and plaster had deteriorated. The building's fabric had also been extensively damaged by damp and dry rot, while the post-war reconstruction of the roof, following the unscheduled arrival of the bomb in 1940, had proved inadequate.

Fr Sherbrooke was committed to realising a restoration and building scheme for St Patrick's that would both restore the splendour of this Grade II* listed building, and even more importantly, enable the parish to better fulfil its pastoral and social mission.



Damp had caused major deterioration to the church walls and ceilings.



A building committee was established, chaired by a good friend of the parish, Canon Peter Newby, a man ideally equipped for the task. As well as being the parish priest of St Mary Moorfields, Canon Newby is an architecture graduate and the son of the engineer Frank Newby. He is also chairman of the Art and Architecture Committee of the Diocese of Westminster.

The project team itself comprised Castanon Associates, the architects, Sinclair Johnston & Partners, the structural engineers and Ellmer Construction, the main contractors.

There were two clear objectives. The first was to restore the Italianate interior to its former glory and re-establish the harmony and integrity of the architect John Kelly's original design. Or as Canon Newby put it, to "re-order the re-orderings".

The second was to carry out modernisations and improvements that would provide much needed new accommodation in the basement. This was a rabbit warren of damp, dark rooms and dingy corridors that opened up would to provide facilities for the vital pastoral and outreach activities of the parish.

The estimated cost of the cost of the work was a daunting £4m. In 2004, a fund raising team was assembled and within five years sufficient money had been raised for work to begin. By the church's completion the target figure had been reached without recourse to government or diocesan support.

The work began in April 2010 and although it forced the closure of St Patrick's for many months, the work of the parish continued in the presbytery and on the streets of Soho. Services were held in local churches and chapels. These included the French Protestant church just across Soho Square, in Notre Dame de France at St Giles-in-the-Fields and in the Anglican chapel of the House of St Barnabas, just a hundred yards away. A temporary chapel was also established in the dining room of the presbytery itself.

The church's interior under restoration and the supporting roof structure being replaced by a new steel framed one.



The basement rooms had long been unfit for purpose.



St Patrick's reopened on 31 May 2011. It was a most memorable celebration with no little drama. Once it was completed, access to the church interior had been restricted to just a handful of key individuals. Hidden from view, it was only revealed when the opening ceremony was underway. The congregation and celebrants, including Archbishop (now Cardinal) Vincent Nichols, remained outside in Soho Square until he had blessed the doors and directed them to be opened, thereby reclaiming the building as a house of God.

The service featured a Magnificat specially composed for the occasion by Sir James MacMillan sung while the Archbishop celebrated Mass, assisted by some 30 priests. The new baptismal chapel and font were also consecrated. Dedicated to Our Lady of Guadeloupe, it features an authenticated reproduction of the miraculous image that appeared on the tilma (cloak) of Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin.

Following the mass, there was a 'christening' of sorts in the basement area, where a celebratory reception made use of the church's new catering facilities for the very first time.

The following day, Mass was once again celebrated by an eminent clergyman - Cardinal George Pell of Sydney. A great supporter of St Patrick's, the cardinal's diocese had generously paid for the restoration of the ancient vestments from Queen Catherine of Aragon's chapel.



The opening mass was celebrated by Archbishop (now Cardinal) Vincent Nichols.





Inside the church, the colour scheme has been simplified and brightened. The capitals and upper wall in the apse as well as the frieze in the entablature have been re-gilded. The high altar has been moved back slightly, allowing Mass to be celebrated ad orientem. Amber marble panels now clad the lower apse wall above the dado and new marble paving has been laid in the sanctuary.

The terrazzo and wooden floor in the nave was removed to facilitate the comprehensive building works that took place in the basement and this was replaced with coloured marble flooring that incorporates underfloor heating.

Subtle, indirect lighting in the nave and apse is provided by lamps fitted out of sight on the ledges, while discreet, suspended fittings provide more direct illumination.

The domed side chapel that occupied the south-eastern corner of the nave has been converted into the new baptistery dedicated to Our Lady of Guadeloupe. The former baptistery at the west end having made way for a lift that enables disabled access to the facilities in the basement.

The original Gray organ had not been played or heard since the 1930s when a new organ built by Bevington was installed in its case. This broke down in the 1980s but fortunately the church still retained the disused pipes and wind chest. The reconstruction and restoration of the historic instrument was entrusted to Goetze & Gwynn and completed in 2012 at a cost of £200,000. Now reinstalled in its alcove on the left of the sanctuary, it is one of only a few surviving early organs that were built for Catholic worship in England, and the only one still in a public church. It contributes enormously to the musical excellence of the liturgy.

The interior of Kelly's church has never looked more magnificent, but the beauty of the restored St Patrick's goes much deeper. The basement of the church represents the greatest transformation of all.



The new Baptistry dedicated to Our Lady of Guadeloupe.

The 1793 organ restored by Goetze and Gwynn.

Light, spacious rooms have been artfully conjured in and around the pre-existing network of cramped cellar rooms and the dark, dank passageways that connected them.

A new meeting area, a classroom and a parish office have been established. More importantly and most impressively, a large multi-purpose hall has been created, with its own well-equipped kitchen - facilities that had been so desperately needed, for so long.

The church is now equipped to undertake its outreach activities as never before. Work that has been given new significance by Pope Francis' recent call for Catholics to bring God's mercy, healing and comfort to others, most especially those in need.

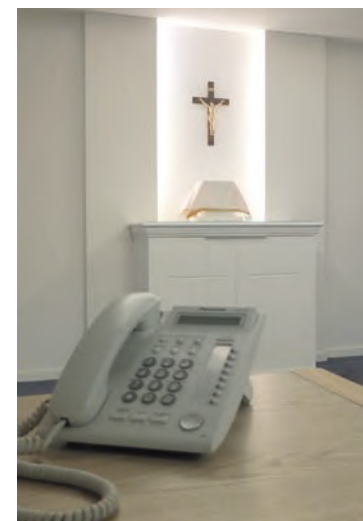
It is a plea that St Patrick's is fully committed to today, as it always has been. It was compassion for the poor that led to the parish being founded over two centuries ago, and it remains the main focus today.

Our 'Open House' offers twice-weekly meals and companionship to the homeless and vulnerable. Funded by sponsors and fundraising events, it is an initiative that predates the restoration work by several years. But now, thanks to the new hall and kitchen, the food can be prepared, served and enjoyed in comfortable surroundings for the very first time.

The walls have been decorated with murals by artist Francesca Church that celebrate narratives from the life of Christ, where the sinner is forgiven, the troubled are counselled and the outsider is welcomed to the table.

The basement rooms have also allowed us to welcome parishioners after services, host film nights and offer a Friday night shelter during the cold winter months.

Our 'SOS' prayer line can also be found there. Staffed by unpaid volunteers, it is an emergency telephone service that operates every night of the year, dispensing help and hope to those in distress. It has proved an enormously worthwhile initiative, with 85,000 calls answered since its introduction in 2002.



The anteroom devoted to the SOS prayer line.

A basemant wall mural by artist Francesca Church.

We also provide support for the many addicts who come to our door. Initially, by offering addiction counselling 'on site' and also in collaboration with the International Cenacolo movement.

Each Monday evening at St. Patrick's, the Cenacolo prayer group offers an opportunity for supporters and the addicts we meet on the street and elsewhere, to come together in the spirit of prayer, solidarity and togetherness.

The Comunità Cenacolo was founded by Sister Elvira Petrozzi in July 1983, as a response to the desperation of the many young people she saw on the streets - drug addicts and non-addicts, who were leading miserable lives without point or purpose.

She initially created a 'safe house' in the village of Salozzo in Northern Italy to tackle the spiritual as well as physical damage caused by drugs and alcohol dependency. More recently the movement opened a facility near Kendal in Westmorland.

You do not have to believe in God to join the community, but you must have a strong commitment to change the way that you have lived your life.

The St Patrick's Evangelisation School (SPES) was established more than a dozen years ago to offer young people a source of spiritual guidance. Often they sense they have a 'calling', a vocation, but they are unsure of how they may best respond. Courses and lectures provide adult catechesis and theological instruction and many former students have progressed to the priesthood and the religious life.



Sister Elvira Petrozzi
founder of the
Comunità Cenacolo.

Other church activities include 'Night Fever' a bi-monthly venture, out on the streets of Soho where lay evangelists invite people to come in, light candles in the church and be open to God. There is also an annual 'Advent Mission' involving street evangelisation, along with school visits and the 'Holy Hour for Life' that also takes place monthly.

In 2014, Pope Francis asked that each diocese have a church open for twenty-four hours of Eucharistic Adoration and Confession, a 'Day for the Lord'. Cardinal Nichols asked St Patrick's to host this initiative in Westminster and the parish has continued to do so.

During 2016, proclaimed as the Jubilee Year of Mercy by Pope Francis, St Patrick's was chosen by the Cardinal to host one of the Holy Doors in the diocese. One of the original church's portals on Sutton Row was then duly dedicated as the entrance where pilgrims might obtain a plenary indulgence.

These many and varied initiatives echo changes in the needs of the parish and indeed in the role of the Catholic Church in England.

If the nineteenth century was one of social and missionary endeavour and the twentieth century was a period of consolidation, then a key focus at St Patrick's in the twenty-first century is the New Evangelisation.

These are on-going programmes and individual events that seek not only to deepen the faith of practising Catholics but also to reach out to the non-practising and to non-Catholics as well.



The church regularly
takes to the streets
of Soho.



Daniel O'Connell, the prominent Irish politician, became a driving force in the parish.

Since its earliest days the church has been a spiritual centre for the Irish in London, and the feast of St. Patrick has always been celebrated in grand style. Whilst it was not a centre of Irish Nationalism in a strictly political sense, it was certainly a centre for devotion to St Patrick, a place to celebrate his feast and to be proud of one's Irish blood.

Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth century it was a hive of Irish activity, with Daniel O'Connell the prominent Irish politician a driving force in the parish. Instrumental in winning the emancipation that allowed Catholics to sit in Parliament, he was also a benefactor of the St Patrick's charity school described earlier.

A small plaque on a table in the presbytery records that together with Cardinal Wiseman, he co-founded the Dublin Review here in 1836. This became an influential Catholic periodical that aimed to keep Catholics abreast of current thinking and expose 'the Catholic view' to non-Catholics. O'Connell was also vice-president of The Catholic Institute of Great Britain, which held its meetings nearby at 14 Soho Square during the 1840s.

The brass wall panel dedicated to the Connaught Rangers reflects another Irish connection. Renowned for their marching song 'It's a long way to Tipperary', the colours of this celebrated Irish regiment of the British Army were long displayed in the old Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel. Now lost, they had been bequeathed by the military authorities when the regiment was disbanded on the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

Eamon de Valera, founding father of the Irish Republic and its first Taoiseach attended St Patrick's Day Mass here in 1958.

Today, a relatively small proportion of the regular parishioners are Irish. That said, the church continues to occupy a special place in the hearts not only of London's Irish community but of Irish Catholics the world over.

St Patrick's feast day is ever a joyous occasion here and continues to be celebrated with shamrock blessed and distributed at the Masses.



The wall plaque outside the sacristy dedicated to the Connaught Rangers.

A side altar prepared for the St Patrick's day celebrations.



Cardinal Wiseman was a regular mass celebrant and co-founder of the Dublin Review.



Today, Catholics from all the nations of the earth are drawn in common faith to worship here. It is a place of serenity and succour. St Patrick's offers a refuge not only from the hustle and bustle of modern life, but more importantly from the materialism and greed that are all too often in evidence on the streets that surround it.

It is a church made glorious by the generosity of others. We have fine art and precious objects in our possession – a painting of the crucifixion by a pupil of Van Dyke, a relic of St Oliver Plunkett and the vestments from Catherine of Aragon's chapel in the Palace of Whitehall.

They speak of a history of Catholicism, which has lived on despite the turbulence of the Reformation and the persecution of Catholics for many years.

Every year sees a procession honouring the martyrs from the Tower of London to Tyburn, and they stop at St. Patrick's on the way. The proximity to St. Giles is not coincidental, for it was there that the martyrs took the St. Giles' cup on what was their journey not only to their place of execution, but also into and through the doors of Heaven.

As well as a long history of Catholicism in this place, there is an eminent history too. In Mother Magdalen and Fulton Sheen it has enjoyed the rare patronage of two venerables.

That said, it is the support of ordinary people that has sustained the parish through the last two and a quarter centuries, the witness of faith in times of difficulty and the loving service of priests.

As we look to the next chapter in our history there is much that we can be proud of, not least the prayers and the sacrifices of those who have gone before.

The nearby Crossrail has taken its toll. When their works are completed, we will re-commence our own. Scaffolding will rise again, allowing us to restore the façade and repair external damage.

But this cloud has a silver lining. The associated local demolition work will eventually unveil building fabric that has been hidden for centuries.

St Patrick's will catch the eye of passers-by as never before. And with the local station's estimated 200,000 passengers a day there will be passers-by aplenty



Father (now Canon)
Alexander Sherbrooke,
rector of St Patrick's
since 2001.

I hope you have enjoyed this wonderful booklet which has come as a result of much hard work, generosity and prayer. The story of St Patrick's and Soho will be enriched by the reading and sharing of this story.

It gives wonderful witness to many years of the presence of the Church in this part of London by way of ministering to the poor and the outcast, celebrating the Holy Mass and inviting people into a house of prayer.

Our long history is witness to the generosity of many and the pennies of the poor. It is a story that continues beyond today and one hopes that those who have contributed in the past will recognise a similar response to the challenges of our time.

This booklet gives witness to the physical beauty of the Church but also paints a picture of the sacrifices and prayer of those who have gone before us. I hope you will keep the Parish and its parishioners in your heart as we continue to reach out into the streets around us.

Soho has changed so much and will continue to do so in the years to come but the promises of the Lord will always persevere that he has said that he will be with us until the end of time. Please continue to keep us in your prayer as we pray on a regular basis for our friends, our benefactors and those who have gone to God.

Canon Alexander Sherbrooke



Stained glass windows
will add the finishing
touch to the newly
exposed exterior walls

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