



# Church & Heritage

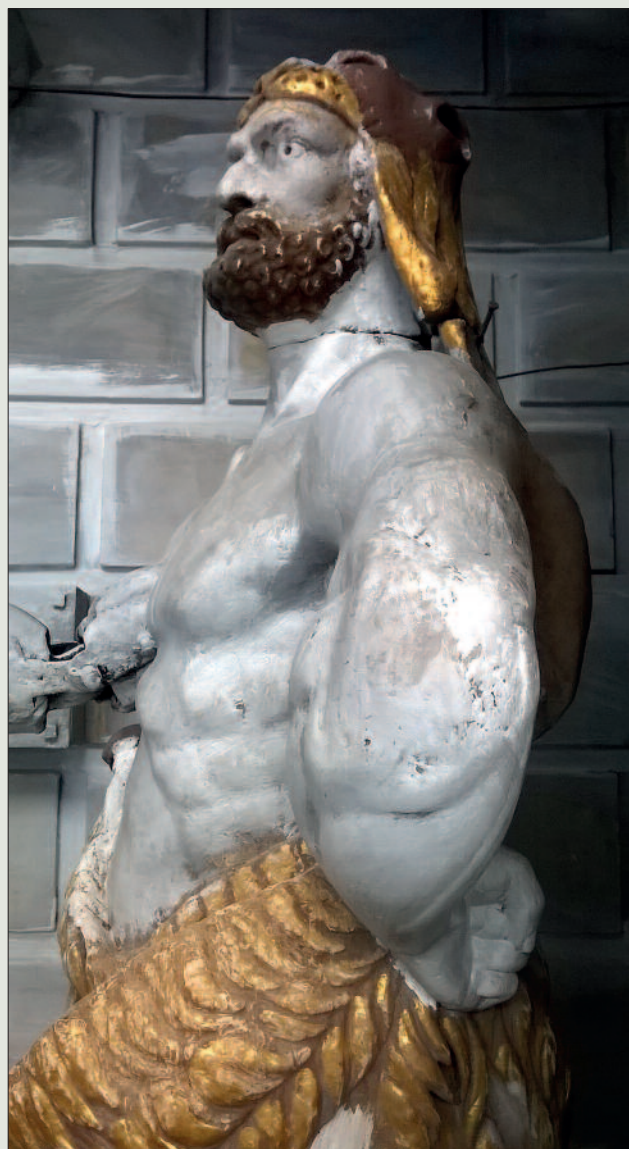
BUILDING





## PROJECT

## ST DUNSTAN-IN-THE-WEST, LONDON



## THE GIANTS AT ST DUNSTAN-IN-THE-WEST

by Simon L Ablett, Ablett Architects Ltd

We are fortunate that many of our streets are rich with architectural detail from many centuries and Fleet Street in London is no exception. The first church is mentioned in 1185 although it was probably founded earlier. Whilst the church escaped the Great Fire, from 1829 the old Medieval church was swept away as part of Victorian modernising and widening of the street. A new, unusual octagonal church with a square tower and an octagonal lantern, to the designs of John Shaw senior was built, with the foundation stone laid in 1831. The building work was to be completed by his son.

Not all was lost when the Medieval church was demolished as many of the monuments were relocated within the new church. The classical timber clock pavilion had been added to the church in 1671 with the clock drum at the end of an arm and projecting over the

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street, this being the first clock in London to have a minute hand. For the sum of 200 guineas the whole pavilion and its clock were bought and relocated to Francis Seymour-Conway, 3rd Marquess of Hertford’s, mansion in Regent’s Park in London. It remained there, with the clock drum at the end of an arm and projecting over the

until Lord Rothermere bought the mansion and returned the clock pavilion to the church in 1935 to mark the Silver Jubilee of King George V (the mansion, designed by Decimus Burton, was subsequently demolished and replaced by Winfield House, the official residence of the American ambassador).

The pavilion contains two large timber figures, or giants, possibly representing Gog and Magog who strike the bells with their clubs when their heads also turn. Gog and Magog are supposedly descen-



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dants of a race of giants following the coupling of the thirty-three daughters of Emperor Diocletian with demons in a land known as Albion. The alternative story is that the two giants were the last two survivors of the sons of the thirty-three daughters of Diocletian, who were captured and kept chained by Brutus (who had founded the new Troy, to become London), to the gates of a palace on the site of the Guildhall and act as guardians.

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The pavilion suffered storm damage in the winter of 2016/17 and a new copper roof was needed and the opportunity was taken to improve the drip detail to the cornice and the detailing of the copper sheets. The whole pavilion was redecorated. The heavily muscled and ferocious looking giants are slightly greater than full size and were found to be in very good condition. The loincloths draped from their heads appear to be leopard pelts and these were re-gilded. The clock face/drum had fared less well with splits to the copper and the laps were not consistently or logically detailed and water had penetrated. Various repairs with a new copper centre disc to the face were undertaken. New LED lighting was provided to the interior of the pavilion activated by a photocell and a timeclock.

The repair work has ensured that the giants will continue to keep a watching eye over the ever-changing street scene, reminding us of the passing of time and continue to delight tourists and city workers. ■

### PROJECT TEAM:

Main Contractor: Artemis Conservation Ltd

Clock: Public Clocks

Coppersmith: Peters Roofing

Lighting supplier: Collingwood lighting.

St Dunstan-in-the-West, 186A Fleet Street, London EC4A 2HR

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