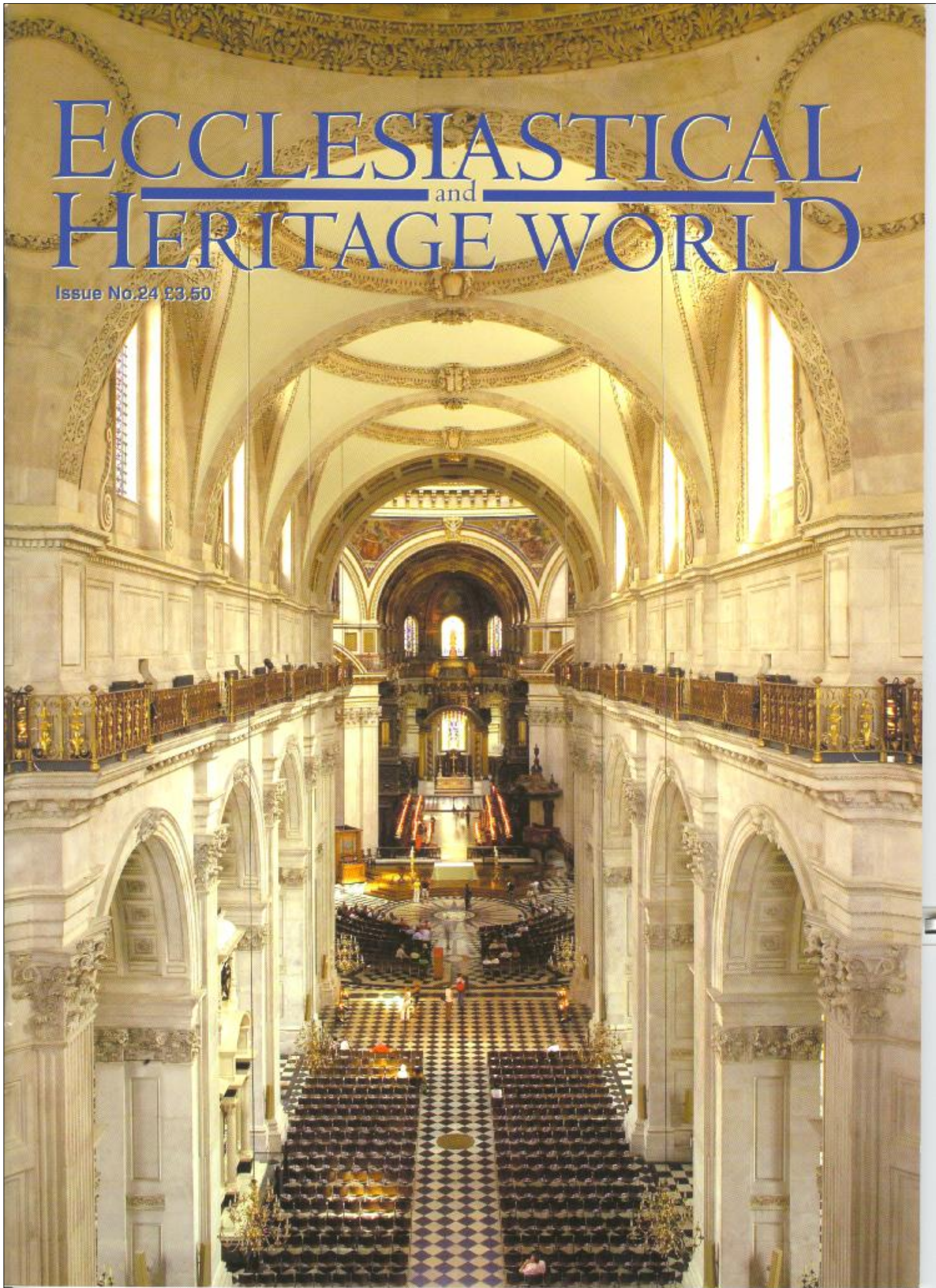


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Cover Story

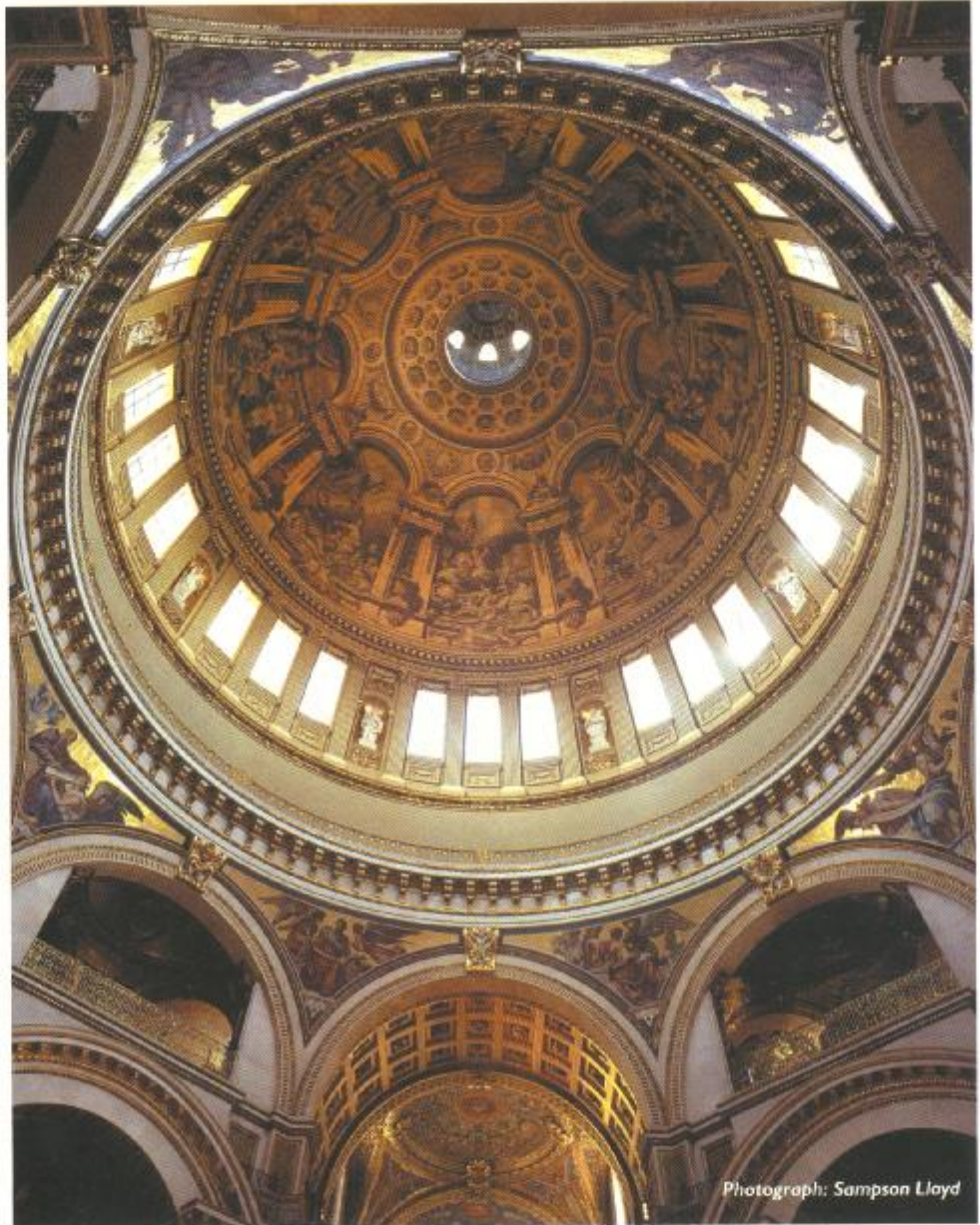
St Paul's
Cathedral: 300th
anniversary
restoration

On the front cover of this issue we are delighted to be able to picture the interior of St Paul's Cathedral in all its restored glory, following a massive cleaning and restoration effort lasting four years and costing £10.8m. In past issues we have followed the progress of the restoration programme, both inside and outside the building, in preparation for the 300th anniversary of the laying of the final stone of the lantern tower in 1708.

We were able to reveal the beauty of the ceremonial West Entrance, with its shining Portland stone, and in issue 23 we showed you the remarkable cradle erected to enable the mosaics in the dome to be inspected and cleaned. Now, a major phase of the work is complete and the interior has shed the grime of centuries to display itself in all the airy lightness intended by its creator, Sir Christopher Wren. That lightness is added to by the new lighting scheme, involving restoration of old chandeliers and the introduction of 21st-century optic-fibre technology.

Underground, the Nelson Chamber has been restored and relit in time for the 200th anniversary celebrations of his greatest – and fatal – victory.

Much remains to be done, however, and the next great project is the south side of the cathedral, which still displays the scars of 300 years of pollution.



Photograph: Sampson Lloyd

Restored interior is latest phase to be unveiled after four years under wraps

After four years obscured by scaffolding, the interior of St Paul's Cathedral was fully revealed in June after a £10.8m programme of cleaning and repair. Work began in May 2001 and has seen the dome, stonework, gilding, mosaics and sculptures

painstakingly restored. During the monumental project over 2,000 bags of dust (each containing one cubic foot of grime) were removed and over 11,000m² of plain stone and 4,500m² of carved stone cleaned. Amazingly, the cathedral remained fully functional throughout. The work was financed by

a single generous donation and was the fourth phase of the historic £40m project which will see St Paul's restored inside and out. Work on the dome peristyle, east end and west front is now complete, and work is now underway on the south façade. The entire project is due to finish in 2008 to mark the >

300th anniversary of the laying of the final stone on the lantern on top of the dome.

The major projects undertaken in the restoration of the interior include:

The dome

Work began on the interior of the world-famous dome in spring 2003, starting with the construction of a 14-storey scaffold specially designed for the space. Suspended by cables from the lantern on top of the dome, the scaffold covered a quarter of the dome at any one time, and was rotated periodically to allow access to all areas.

The scaffold allowed conservators to work on the 18th-century paintings by Sir James Thornhill showing eight scenes from the life of St Paul, following the discovery that the scheme – initially thought to cover only the dome – actually extended down to the tambour, the area below the dome and above the Whispering Gallery. That area had been covered

St Paul's Cathedral: 300th anniversary restoration

over with stone-coloured paint dating back to the 1850s; it is thought the Victorians painted out the mural in the tambour as it had suffered from water damage. The original Thornhill scheme has now been recreated, restoring the architectural coherence to this part of the cathedral.

The stonework

Wren designed his cathedral to be light and airy, but the London smog meant that the internal stone had become heavily dirtied over the centuries. The original painted finish was stripped off in the 1870s, and attempts to clean the interior again in the 1930s were largely unsuccessful. The interior stonework has now been cleaned using Arte Mundit – a latex-based



One of the magnificent mosaics after restoration. Photo: Sampson Lloyd

compound that acts like a facemask, drawing dirt and impurities out of the stone before being gently peeled off. One panel of stone next to the great west doors has been left uncleaned to allow visitors to see the amazing transformation that has taken place.

Mosaics

The mosaics beneath the dome and in the choir aisles

were installed at the end of the 19th century but accumulated dirt had obscured their magnificence. They were meticulously cleaned by hand, using cotton-wool buds and de-ionised water. The St Mark's pendentive mosaic in the north east corner was found to be detached from its backing, partly due to inadequate setting of the mortar and partly due to the vibrations of the adjacent organ. This was carefully removed from the backing, old mortar cleaned off and then re-applied to a new backing.

Sculptures

Over 40 monuments on the cathedral floor have been cleaned, mostly using pencil steam cleaners. The largest of these is the Wellington monument on the north side of the nave, which had been treated with waxes that had darkened, and therefore required more intensive cleaning using poultices.



The interior stonework has been cleaned using Arte Mundit – a latex-based compound. Picture© construction photography

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