

St Paul's interior loses its veil of smog

By A Correspondent

THE interior of St Paul's Cathedral was revealed in its full glory yesterday after a £10.8 million clean-up.

The cleaning and repair of Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece has restored the dome, stonework, gilding, mosaics and sculptures while the cathedral was obscured by scaffolding for four years. The operation, in which more than 15,000 sq m (161,000 sq ft) of stone was cleaned, was financed by a single donation from the family of a retired Scottish banker.

The Very Rev Dr John Moses, Dean of St Paul's, said: "It is impossible to exaggerate our indebtedness as a Chapter to Mr Robin Fleming and his family for their generous benefaction, which has enabled us to carry out over the last four years the most comprehensive programme of internal repair and stone cleaning in the history of Sir Christopher Wren's cathedral. It is now possible for all our visitors to see St Paul's in all its glory as one of the world's great buildings."

Throughout the restoration, the building remained fully operational, with rotating scaffolding enabling work to be carried out around the whole dome. This allowed conserva-

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The restored dome in St Paul's Cathedral, unveiled yesterday after a four-year interior refurbishment of the Wren masterpiece

tors to work on an 18th-century scheme by painter Sir James Thornhill, after it was discovered that some previously unknown sections had been painted over.

Mosaics were with cotton

buds and a latex-based "face mask" cleaned the stonework of centuries of smog, although one panel has been left so that visitors can see the difference.

It is the fourth phase of a £40 million project to restore

St Paul's inside and out. Work on the dome, east end and west front has finished, and work on the south façade has begun. The whole operation is due to finish in 2008 to mark the 300th anniversary of the laying

of the final stone on the lantern at the top of the dome.

The cathedral was built from 1675 after its predecessor was destroyed in the Great Fire of London. Services held there have included the funerals of

DEVOTED SERVICE

■ A cathedral dedicated to St Paul has overlooked the City of London since 604AD

■ The current cathedral, the fourth to occupy the site, was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and built between 1675 and 1710

■ The 1695 organ that Mendelssohn once played is still in use. There has been a choir at the cathedral for more than 900 years

■ The cathedral's mosaics are the result of Queen Victoria's complaint that the interior was "most dreary, dingy and undevotional"

■ St Paul's became a symbol of hope and defiance during the Blitz, when a photograph showed its dome rising above smoke from surrounding bombed buildings

Lord Nelson and Sir Winston Churchill, jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria, peace services marking the end of the First and Second World Wars and the 1981 wedding of the Prince of Wales.