

ALBANY DINNER DANCE

The Albany Taxi Charity were planning on hosting their Annual Dinner and Dance in February 2009, but due to the current economic climate the committee have decided to postpone the event until Spring/Summer 2009.

The Chairman and Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support in 2008 it is greatly appreciated and hope you will continue to support our charity in 2009. Best wishes to you all for 2009 from all the Albany Committee Members.

RESTORATION OF ONE OF LONDON'S OLDEST BUILDINGS BEGINS

Taxi drivers may have noticed that an ambitious project to repair and conserve Westminster Abbey's Chapter House, the birthplace of Parliament, has begun. The English Heritage led project to restore the Chapter House, which has its origins in the 12th century and was home to the King's Great Council in 1257 which eventually became the houses of Parliament, will see the most concentrated programme of works since the 19th century when Sir Gilbert Scott renovated and restored the façade.

The project will focus on repairs to the external walls which have, inevitably, been weathered by city pollution and the atmosphere. Repair and conservation of the mixed limestone and sandstone stonework will be a priority, particularly that at high level where it has suffered most from erosion. Gargoyles and stained glass windows will also be carefully restored and the lead roof and gutters will be repaired and made weather-tight. The works are due to be completed in 2010.

The octagonal Chapter House, in the east cloister, dates from the 1250s and is one of the largest in England. It acted as a venue for the Abbey monks to meet daily to discuss and decide on the Abbey's business. The King's Great Council first assembled here in 1257, effectively the beginning of the English Parliament. The House of Commons used the room in the 14th century, before it was transferred to the Palace of Westminster. After having been a repository for government records from the 1540s, Sir Gilbert Scott, as Architect and Surveyor of the Fabric at the Abbey from 1849-78, restored the Chapter House and designed a triple portico for the north front. Scott also supervised various restoration works to preserve the fabric of the Abbey itself.

Tim Reeve, Properties Director for English Heritage said: "The Chapter House is a building of international importance and sits at the heart not just of Westminster Abbey but of the Westminster World Heritage Site, one of the most visited places on earth. This programme of repairs is an investment in London's unique heritage so that present and future generations can enjoy this jewel of English history, the cradle of its Parliamentary system."

Barry Stow of Stow and Beale Conservation Architects who are leading the conservation



DO YOU RECOGNISE THIS DRIVER?

This image has been sent to Taxi Globe by Russell Glen, asking if anyone recognises who the man is standing by this cab. The photo was amongst some which recently came into a friend's possession and both Russell and his friend would like to know who it is and when it was taken. Regular readers of Taxi Globe may recall articles Russell has written about cabs he has owned. If you can help please either telephone Taxi Globe's editor on 01707 885439 or email sandiegoodwin@hotmail.com and any information can be forwarded on to Russell.



project, said: "The early Chapter House was reportedly 'finer than Salisbury'. In mediaeval times it was used as a place of government, as a meeting place for the House of Commons and subsequently as a document archive. In 1859 George Gilbert Scott reconstructed the roof and upper parts which had been in his words 'dreadfully mutilated'. He described the Chapter House as 'a structure perfect in itself, of a purely English type as to its plan and outline, and as carrying out the principle of window tracery in a fuller and grander degree than any part of the church.' We are delighted to have been selected to conserve Scott's work which, in contrast to so much Victorian restoration, has benefited the public face of the Abbey complex as well as preserving the fine 13th century interior. We look forward to working with the contractor and project team to carry out an exemplary conservation project over the next 18 months."

