

the church, the extra money will be used for other serious repairs which the building fabric needs. Any balance will go to a fund for future maintenance work.

Repair Work Success

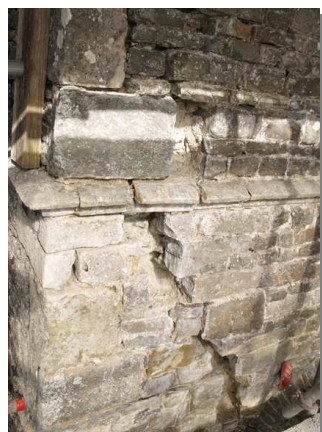


Architect **Jonathan Rhind** (*top left*) of Shirwell was appointed by the Diocese of Exeter to supervise the repairs to the Church. The former English Heritage architect is responsible for 50 church buildings in Devon, Somerset and Cornwall on behalf of the Church of England.



Jonathan was greatly assisted by an architect member of the congregation, **Peter Ferguson** (*bottom left*), in the preparation of drawings and the supervision of the work.

Tenders were invited from three experienced contractors and Strachey & Strachey of Lower Godney near Wells in Somerset were appointed. Work started in mid-February 2008, just 6 months after the start of the Appeal, when the structure was shrouded in scaffolding to allow work to continue whatever the weather of the North Devon winter.



Stonemason **Richard Strachey** carried out the majority of the stonework. The urgent work on the porch involved dismantling and re-building the random-rubble merlons (for the less technical, that's the 'sticky up bits') and a lot of the wall below them. The merlons had been dangerously loosened by movement and weather over 400 years. In the



end the damage was worse than feared and the walls had to be taken down to the string course below the roof line. The SW corner (*above left*) had settled significantly since it was last repaired in the 1870s, perhaps because of the vault placed below the porch in 1804.

The corner was first tied back into the main structure by carefully 'stitching' the masonry together with new



stonework and lime mortar, with stainless steel rods between courses, and then the merlons were re-built (*above left*). Two tonnes of replacement stone came from Beam Quarry between Bideford and Torrington.



After fixing a new timber roof over the existing one (*above left*), a new waterproof covering has been added and new rainwater gutters installed. To finish off the entire porch was re-pointed (*left*).

With perfect timing, the scaffolding came off the porch 5 days before the wedding of Martin Pettifer to Sarah Lee on 17th May 2008 (*below in front of the finished porch*). The apparently boundless enthusiasm of Sarah and Martin, her brother Tom and their friends organising and running the Piltonstock Festival and the Pilton Pirates Float in the Barnstaple Carnival contributed enormously to the success of the overall Appeal.



The tremendous effort of raising the money and getting the work completed in less than 10 months was recognised by the award of **The Heritage Shield** for 2008 by **Barnstaple & District Civic Society** in June.

The Future Maintenance of the Building



A small but still important element of the work is an investigation of the roof of the Chancel adjacent to the south face of the tower. A serious leak means that water is getting into the area used by the Choir (*left*) and the

cause of this needs finding and repairing.

However, in the longer term, the Church will probably need to spend money on re-pointing the south and west faces of the tower as well as the normal ongoing annual maintenance needs of a building of this age. After all, the oldest part of the building has been standing for over 700 years, the youngest part 300 years, so some maintenance can be expected.

The Friends of Pilton Church



To help with funding the future preservation, the revived **FRIENDS OF PILTON CHURCH** plan to organise at least four events each year to raise money. Members of the Pilton community (and

beyond) will be invited to join this newly revived organisation and help raise the £5,000 to £10,000 needed annually. The first event is a **Summer Concert of Music and Words** in the Church on the evening of Pilton Festival (Green Man Day) 19th July.

CONSERVATION OF THE PRIORY CHURCH OF ST MARY, PILTON, BARNSTAPLE

The Problem

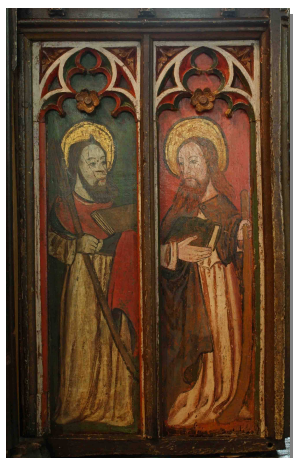
In July 2007, Pilton was set the task of raising £40,000 to stop its beautiful 13th Century Priory Church closing. Why? Because the Church's insurers threatened



withdrawal of public liability cover if repairs to the 15th Century entrance porch were not made. A five-year survey of the building had highlighted urgently needed major work on the structure. Rector of Barnstaple, the **Rev Vernon Ross** (left) said, "Our insurers said we needed to do something urgently or they would withdraw cover." The Church was given just six months to raise the money.

The scaffolding surrounding the roof of the porch showed the parlous state of the parapet and the wet walls the problem with the roof. Hard pointing, plants growing out of the courses and cracks around the gate hinges were further evidence of the problems faced.

What's so interesting about Pilton Church?



Apart from being beautiful, the Church has an interesting history. Founded in 10th Century, it was the church of a Benedictine Priory until The Reformation in 1536. Part of the Rood Screen (left) was recently cleaned to reveal painted panels of the Apostles dating from 1510. The plain octagonal stone font has a fine carved oak canopy and in the Chancel and Raleigh Chapel are 17th Century monuments to the Chichester family.

Church of England Finances



In a letter to the North Devon Journal, the Church was challenged on the need for community support to raise the money. Asked about the finances of running a church, **Churchwarden Kate Hastings** (left) said, "It costs £39,000 a year to keep the church open. Insurance is £5,000 on top of that. In a good year we can just about keep going with normal maintenance, but we don't have the money for major repairs like this."

Unfortunately, although the Church of England is asset-rich it is also income-poor. This means that each church is responsible for its own buildings, with little money available to the Parish from the Diocese of Exeter. So the congregation realised that it was unable to fund the work alone and had to appeal to the community for help.

Appeal Launched

The Appeal got under way in mid-August with the appointment of a volunteer **Appeal Co-ordinator, Martin Haddrill** (seen in the next column in front of the porch wearing the Appeal T-Shirt). Soon after came the production of the first of four newsletters, **Pilton's Progress** sponsored by local businesses. The response of Pilton, Barnstaple, Devon and beyond was fantastic. Donations, large and small, poured in from individuals



and organisations concerned for the well-being of the building.

Over 25 events were organised in the 4 months up to Christmas — from car boot sales to pop festivals, pub games to black tie dinners, collecting boxes to seasonal concerts, dance shows to marathon running, raffles to Christmas draws, trees quizzes to fun quizzes, and stalls to coffee mornings. The three pubs in the village — **The Reform Inn, The Chichester Arms and The Windsor Arms** — challenged each other to raise the most through events and collecting tins and many of the village shops had collecting tins on their counters. **Pilton Stores** sold the Appeal T-Shirts and greetings cards of the Church and

the Rood Screen.

For example, a **Fun Quiz Night** in Pilton Church Hall in September raised £750. **Piltonstock**, an all-day festival of local bands in The Chichester Arms, raised £2,000 in October, and a **Garden Party** at Bradiford House raised £500 in November.

And in December, the Grand Christmas Draw at the Concert of Seasonal Words and Music by **Barnstaple Jubilee Singers** in the Church (below) raised £1500 - the top prize a holiday in Spain. There were many, many more, small and large, all worthy of note.



Good Media Coverage

The **North Devon Journal** gave the Appeal great support with news and featured stories throughout. It also sponsored 'Piltonstock'. **Network Now** helped with free space for updates on the Appeal and advertisements for events. **BBC Spotlight** and **ITV Westcountry** helped us to get the message out and raise the profile of the enormous problem faced.

Appeal Target More Than Achieved

Amazingly, in such a short period, donations and organised events combined raised over £25,000. In parallel, the Church had set out to raise as much as it could from charitable grants. In September, the Appeal received its first positive response to the many applications made — a pledge of up to £15,000 from the **Bridge Trust**. This was followed by an unexpected £8,000 grant from the **Devon Historic Churches Trust** in November and a £3,000 grant from **North Devon District Council** in December.

Overall, the total raised exceeded £60,000. Whilst the porch was the urgent problem, as it would have closed