

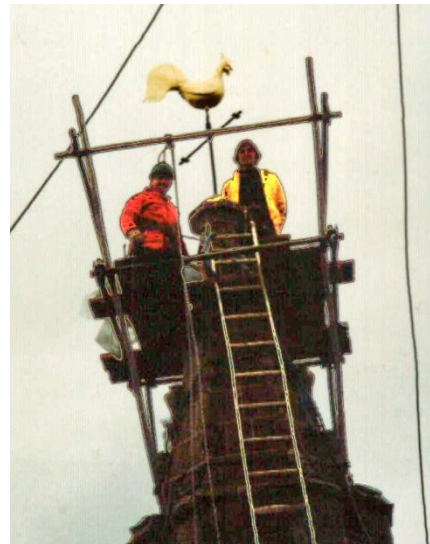
Repair of the Cockerel Weather Vane on St Mary's Church in 1990



In 1713 St Mary's Church, Pilton, gained a faceless clock made by Richard Webber which struck the hours on a bell separate from the peal of eight. The bell's original position is not recorded, but it was re-located to the pinnacle of the NE corner of the tower in 1845. The so-called 'clock' bell was actually a curfew bell which would have been rung every evening to remind everyone to cover their fires until morning and to go to bed.

It was also in 1845 that the cockerel weather vane is reported as having been installed on the tower, when the Churchwardens were W B Fisher and Joseph Laramy, the latter a local wool merchant. This was confirmed in a report in the North Devon Journal when the cockerel was taken down for examination in October 1912. It was found to be engraved with the message that it was 'made by J. Moon, 76 High Street, Barnstaple in 1845 and erected by order of W B Fisher and J Laramy, Churchwardens'. This message is still to be seen on the cockerel.

There are no further reports of the cockerel until the top piece of masonry on which it was fixed was dislodged by the severe gales of January 1990 and fell to the ground. The three hundredweight (about 150kg) piece created a big crater and in the process the copper cockerel was badly damaged. Luckily no-one was standing underneath when it fell!



The repair of the cockerel was undertaken by artist/craftsman and agricultural engineer Neil Hawkins (far left). He recounted the story of the repair to The Pilton Story and provided us with these photographs. First it involved repairing and reshaping the 'just over three

foot long' cockerel. It was then taken to Exeter to be coated in gold leaf. It was brought back and installed initially in Neil Hawkins' garden on a new piece of masonry. The support has a roller bearing and the cockerel was carefully balanced so that it would need

only the lightest of breezes to make it rotate. Because of its weight, the piece of masonry on which the weather vane was to sit was lifted into position by a helicopter from RMB Chivenor on 22nd October 1990 after which the gold cockerel was reinstated in its position as one of the iconic images of Pilton.