

Vane effort earns cheer

YOUNG and old gathered at Woodchester's parish church yesterday to watch the return of the building's freshly-gilded weather cock.

Steeplejack Jeremy Spirit was cheered by children from the local primary school as he scaled the church's 123ft "broached" spire to return the golden bird to its perch.

The re-gilding of the weather vane, last carried out in the 1970s, was the icing on the cake for bellringers at St Mary's Parish Church who raised £3,000 over two years to clean up the belfry.

They took action after twigs, rags and muck deposited inside the steeple by hundreds of pigeons threatened to silence the bells.

The oldest member of the bellringers, Lance Cordwell (84), was joined by 10-year-old Leah Haslam to watch the return of the weather cock.

Spokesman Bill Brunt said the fundraising campaign for the belfry had attracted support from Woodchester and further afield.

And he explained that part of the money raised paid for the lightning conductor to be brought up to standard as well as for the regilding of the weather cock.

"The object of the exercise had been to block off the little louvres (sound holes) in the steeple to stop birds dropping rubbish inside," said Mr Brunt.

"They were able to get inside after wire covering the louvres rotted away.

"There was such a volume of stuff up there that it would have silenced the bells. It was also a health hazard.

"When we had carried out the essential work, we found we had enough money left over to regild the weathercock which really was the icing on the cake.

"When we launched the appeal we had letters from people saying how much the efforts of the bellringers were appreciated and how much the bells would be missed."