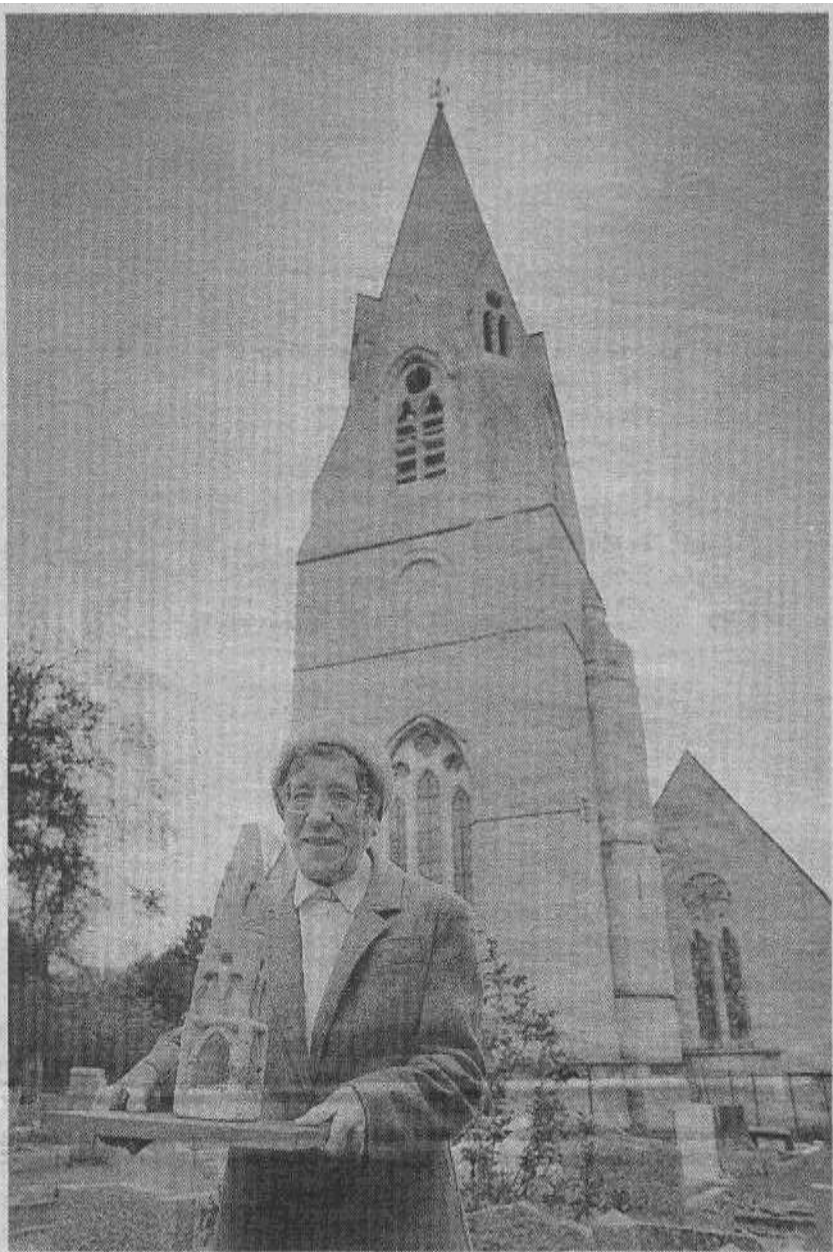


Spire model helps the church fund



Model replica . . . Phyllis with the carving

A PENSIONER has given her precious model of a church spire to fundraisers to help them save the original steeple.

Mrs Phyllis Cox, 78, from Kiln Lane, Wheatley, has allowed the miniature replica of the spire of St Mary's Church, in Wheatley, to go on display in the church to help raise funds.

Her grandfather, Mr Mark Smith, built the original 160ft spire and its 18-inch replica 150 years ago out of local Headington stone.

But due to weathering the original is now in danger of collapsing if it is not rebuilt.

Villagers and VIPs have

joined forces in a fund-raising drive to collect £150,000 for the work to be carried out.

Radio Four presenter Sue MacGregor, who lived in Wheatley as a child, launched the appeal and revealed that the fund had already reached £80,000.

Mrs Cox, who has lived in the village all her life, said the model had been handed down to her from her father Arthur, who was also a stonemason.

She said ten years ago her late husband Richard dropped the model and it smashed to pieces.

But patients at the Stoke

Mandeville Hospital, near Aylesbury, put it back together during a patient rehabilitation workshop.

Mrs Cox said: "I was upset when it was broken but it looks fine now it has been put back together again.

"The model has been passed down through my family but I thought it would be nice to give it to the church as I have not got any children myself.

"It is sad the original spire has started to deteriorate but it is wonderful all these people are rallying around to save it."

