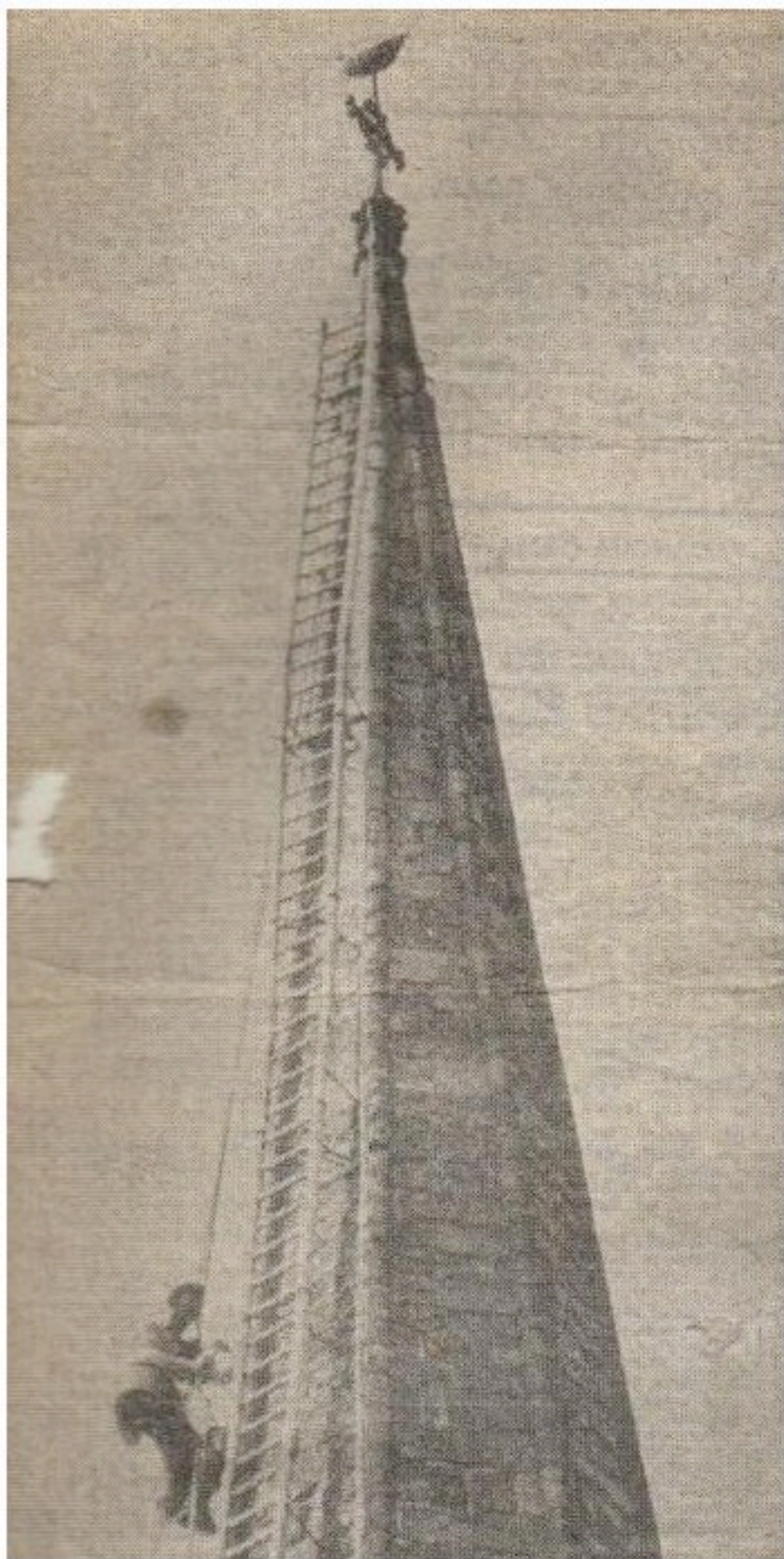




People living in the Forest of Dean village of Ruardean have, this week, been able to watch steplejacks climbing around the church tower and spire.

The Rector, the Rev. L. J. Bowyer, who moved to St. John the Baptist, Ruardean, four and a half years ago, called in experts to examine the structure of the church, and they said that the bells should not be used until repair work had been carried out.

A public appeal was launched to raise money and now, after several delays, work has at last started on the repair operation.

Mr. Bowyer said the

steplejacks will carry out a complete overhaul and pointing of the spire.

The church is one of the oldest in the Forest of Dean, and the reputed date of the foundation is 1111.

At that time it was thought to be a small chapel of the Norman period, but within the next century the arcade was opened and the aisle constructed.

Extensive alterations in the 15th century gave St. John's its present appearance, but the aisle remains as the oldest part of the present building.

Pictured above is a steplejack at work on the spire.