

Bodicote is situated in north Oxfordshire some two miles from Banbury. Until 1855, when it became a separate parish, its church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, was a chapel of ease to its mother church in Adderbury. In 1841 George Warriner MA took up the curacy, having served in Epwell for two years since he was ordained in 1839. In the same year his father wrote in a letter to George's uncle,

*"George is proceeding very satisfactorily with the curacy; he has wonderful schemes in his head of enlarging and new pewing the church and erecting an organ, the only difficulty is where to find the money required to pay for the above improvements"* (*Faith, Hope and Charity: The Story of Bodicote Church*, George C. Walker, 1994).

In a letter to Robert Morrell, the Registrar of the Diocese, dated March 1842, W.H. Hitchcock from 'Boddicott' House mapped out plans for the redevelopment of the church. In it he explained the need to enlarge the church, complaining that children attending Sunday school were obliged to sit within the altar rails – the Chancel being full. He talked of the lack of free seating for the poor and suggested demolishing the tower in the north aisle, because it was unsafe, and rebuilding it in the west end of the chapel. He also had great plans for increasing the seating and estimated the cost would be about £750 – to be raised by public subscription. In a further letter a week later, Hitchcock mentions that an application for funds had been forwarded to the Church Building Society. This society was founded in 1818 to raise funds to repair and enlarge churches. A condition to receiving a grant was that a certain number of seats be free from pew rents for the use of the poor. This is probably why in his initial letter Hitchcock details the plans to install two hundred 'free and unappropriated sittings'.

In his book *The History of Banbury* published in 1841, Alfred Beesley gives an insight into how the church looked before renovation work began. He spoke of the 'somewhat unusual positioning of the tower on the north side', before going into some detail about the existing rood loft.

*'The Roodloft, or ancient gallery in which the Holy Rood was placed, between the nave and chancel, remains perfect, and should be carefully preserved, as such relics of antiquity are far from common.'*

J.C. Buckler's wash drawing (right) dated 1825, gives a good view of the exterior of the church some eight years before rebuilding. It shows an Early English style church, enlarged in the fourteenth century to include two aisles and a fifteenth century embattled tower rising from the north side.