

That evening a further service was held, this time led by the Reverend W.C. Risley, the vicar of Deddington. In his sermon he made a pointed reference to certain villagers who had not contributed to the cost of the rebuilding.

*‘How justly must those who had contributed to the present work feel a pride in what they had done, but that there were some among the inhabitants who had kept aloof from the work, was an event which the Reverend Preacher must ever lament and deplore.’*

To whom was Mr Risley referring when he made this comment? There is no doubt that all three hundred people in the congregation knew exactly who these inhabitants were and why they had not contributed. The following week a letter to the editor was published in the *Banbury Guardian*. Stung into action by the vicar’s words, the writer set out the salient facts in a ‘. . . succinct statement of the facts to set them right.’ He had several grievances. He claimed that the north aisle could have been repaired and the tower made safe. He said the tower’s northern situation was unique and added to its antiquity and that it was an object of regard for the inhabitants. The inhabitants, he claimed, were uneasy about disturbing the dead, as they must surely do when the floors were dug up. As for the seating, he said that there were plenty of seats for those who attended church and he quoted the 1831 and 1841 censuses showing an actual fall in the population of the village. Most of all he was concerned that the financial burden for the work would fall on the parishioners. He signed himself ‘A Dissentient’.

When he disclaims the need for extra seating the Dissentient was later proved correct. The census figures for 1831 showed a population of 779, in 1841 it stood at 729 and by 1851 the population had fallen again to 673. According to the 1841 census there were ten families involved in plush weaving living in Bodicote. They were probably outworkers for one of several plush manufactories in Banbury. Many of these people moved to Coventry to work in the factories operating the new powered looms, thus reflecting the national trend of rural depopulation. His claim that there was seating for all may also have had a personal edge to it. Pews belonged to individual houses and were bought and sold with those properties. If the Dissentient was a property owner his estate could lose value if he were to have his seating reduced. Alteration of the situation of his pew could affect his status in the village. He had much to protect.