

Wargrave Local History Society

From the archives

This item from the Wargrave Local History Society archive is an advertisement that appeared in the *Reading Mercury*, on August 14th 1847.

Headed 'Enlargement of Wargrave Church', it says that the church had remained of the same dimensions since it was first built. In fact, it had been changed, as in 1635 the parishioners had asked to 'rebuild the tower now irreparably damaged in a more convenient place', and that resulted in the present tower being added at the west end. The advert also mentions that to increase the seating capacity of the church, some galleries had been added, which "whilst they had afforded some new accommodation, had impaired the old". That work had been done in the early 19th century, The apex of the nave roof had been just above the brick arch in the tower, but the roof line was raised at that time, so although the ground dimensions remained the same, the height had been increased. The engraving at the foot of this page shows the church as it appeared in 1818, after that had been done.

The August 1847 plan was to add an aisle on the south side, which would provide 150 additional seats, and the same newspaper carried an advert a fortnight later inviting builders and contractors to view the plans etc 'at any hour' during the following week, and submit their tenders by September 6th, Mr W Garaway winning the main contract, Messrs J Heath, and Wheeler contracts for masonry work, and Mr J Allwright one for glazing and staining the pews. The area of the existing transept on the south side, which had a roof at right angles to the main nave, came within that of the new aisle. The latter was constructed of flint to match the existing church walls, with an arcade of stone pillars along the line of the original south wall. Some of the gravestones that were displaced by the new aisle were laid down the floor of the nave, whilst stone plaques were placed at the east end of the new aisle, on the outside of the chancel wall, in memory of Robert Piggott, founder of the village schools.

The work was completed by October 1849, and by far the largest donor was not, as might be anticipated, the Lord of the Manor, but the Rev Thomas Hayes, who in addition to the £200 listed in the *Reading Mercury*, gave a further donation, paid for two windows on the north side, and provided a gothic reading desk. His name is not a familiar one in the village - he had married Louisa Hitchings (one of the vicar of Wargrave, Revd James Hitchings, daughters) in 1840, but she had died in 1846. Subscriptions came from all sectors of the village - the Widow Duckett's 6d no doubt being as valued as the larger donations of the gentry.

The church in this form did not last for very long, being destroyed by fire in 1914.

ENLARGEMENT OF WARGRAVE CHURCH.

THE Parish Church of Wargrave, a building of great antiquity, has remained the same in its external dimensions since its first erection, while the population of the Parish has progressively and largely increased. The want of Church-room that occasioned has long been felt, and has been partially supplied by galleries, which, while they have afforded some new accommodation, have impaired the old, and left still unsupplied the Church-room needed for the occupiers of the farms and smaller family houses, and all the middle classes of residents within the Parish.

To supply this want it is now proposed to erect a South Aisle, calculated to contain 150 additional Seats, of which one-third will be left unappropriated. The cost of the work is estimated at not less than £600 for the exterior building alone. To furnish that sum, a Committee, consisting of the Vicar and Churchwardens, Major Court and Mr. Taylor, have opened a Parochial Subscription: but they know that there are many, unconnected with the Parish, who love to take a share in that Sacred work by which our ancient Parish Churches—the glory of our land, and the strength of our National Church—are kept in a befitting state; and to them they address this request for that assistance which will enable them to accomplish the enlargement and improvement of Wargrave Church.

Subscriptions, however small, will be thankfully received by any member of the Committee..

On the part of the Committee,
JAMES HITCHINGS, Vicar.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:—			
	£	s.	d.
The Right Hon. Lord Braybrooke	50	0	0
The Hon. Spencer Dudley Montagu	10	0	0
J. J. Bulkeley, Esq., Linden Hill	10	0	0
Major Court, Castlemons	10	0	0
Miss Court	1	0	0
J. Adolphus Young, Esq., Harehatch Lodge, a Window in the Church			
Rev. Thomas Hayes.....	200	0	0
The Rev. J. Edward Austen Leigh	25	0	0
Edmund Currie, Esq., Oakley House ...	50	0	0
Frederic Sarney, Esq.	10	0	0
Thomas Taylor, Esq.	10	0	0
Rev. J. Hitchings, Vicar	50	0	0
Rev. G. Kirk Weston	1	0	0

