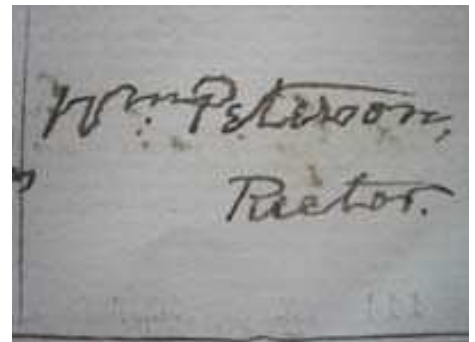
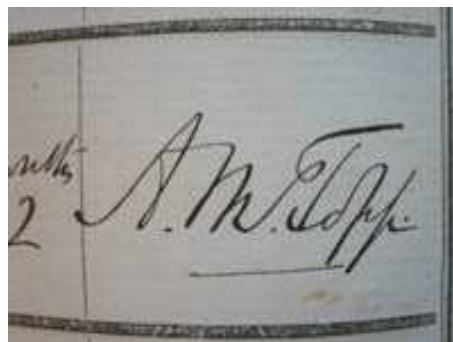


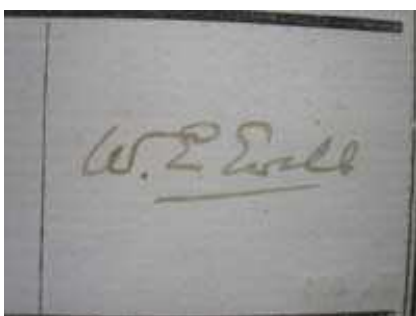
Unearthing Biddenden: Article 2

After transcribing the Burial Register for Biddenden I jotted down a few notes and a couple of short articles emerged.

The handwritten entries, initially all in pen and ink, hinted at a few stories in themselves. Some reflected the beautiful and elaborate handwriting of the 1800s, whilst others were, at times, illegible & splattered with ink splots. If I were to award marks for the most exquisite writing it would have to go to both Herbert C Winter and, appropriately named A M Topp in 1879!



I was particularly struck by the entries made by William Peterson, Rector between around 1882 - 1899. His handwriting, never easy to decipher, deteriorated badly over the years. He also missed entering several burials, which were added later by other Rectors. On doing a bit of research, I discovered he was the father of Bertha Peterson, who was convicted of the murder of John Whibley a Sunday school teacher in the village. She eventually was sent to Broadmoor Criminal Asylum where she spent the rest of her life. The years leading up to this tragedy must have been traumatic for William Peterson. His epileptic wife died some years earlier after falling into a lighted fire. During a church service, in around 1887 he collapsed & was taken seriously ill. Despite his difficulties he took the trouble to add little comments beside some of the entries which add interest & colour to this piece of our history.



One interestingly named Rector W. E. Evill performed burials over a period of a few years around 1912. Possibly his relation, Ernest Evill, Rector of Frittenden, paid a few visits to our church in 1948 during a time Biddenden was without its own Rector.

The numbers of burials recorded in one year, at times, varied greatly. In 1887 twenty four burials took place & then just 2 years later in 1889 just six were recorded. The lowest number of recorded burials took place in 1981 with only five entries.

This project was never about merely copying a list of names & numbers. I felt truly privileged to play a part in making a part of Biddenden's history more accessible to everyone.

I hope many of you will explore this wonderful piece of our village history available on the church website at www.allsaintsbiddenden.org. A copy will be available in the church in the near future.

Angie Joy, December 2009