

## **Village Echoes**

### **Water Colour Painting Update**

Thanks to one of our members, who can never resist a research challenge, we have now solved the mystery:

A search in the census returns for 1911 and 1921 discovered a Martin Law Holdich employed as a schoolmaster in Catford, Lewisham. This looked a promising lead if it could be proved that he had (a) any connection with Goudhurst and (b) was an amateur artist.

A search in the British Newspaper Archive revealed that in June 1883 Martin Law Holdich had left his post as Master of Goudhurst "Mixed Schools" (i.e. the National School on Clay Hill) and had been presented with a writing-desk purchased by donations from pupils, fellow teachers and other friends in Goudhurst. At the time he had been Master of the school for five and a half years. With a link to Goudhurst established, scrutiny of entries in the 1881 census then showed him as a 24-year-old bachelor born in Birmingham and living at the National School.

More extensive examination of newspapers built up a picture of his career: he moved around a lot, and his skills included teaching phonography and shorthand (at evening classes in London); also, he composed musical items and sketches and, in his late fifties at the outbreak of World War One, he had joined the Volunteer Training Corps as a bandsman. Crucially, the article providing this information, which appeared in the Hinckley Times of 11<sup>th</sup> January 1919, also stated the following:

"Mr Holdich is an excellent water-colour artist, the walls of his home in Catford being hung with his own works".

Whether he painted the Goudhurst water-colour from memory in 1910, or from a photograph or on a personal visit to the village we shall never know.