

William Sankey F.R.C.S.

JOE HARMAN

WILLIAM SANKEY, a former Army Surgeon, settled in Dover in 1814. He became a well respected person in the town and supported Canon John Puckle in his efforts to restore St. Mary's Church.

There was very determined opposition to the proposals and the Vestry was only prepared to patch up the building, but



William Sankey's tombstone in the churchyard at East Langdon

Sankey and Puckle were convinced that major work was needed to make the fabric safe. A compromise was reached, £1,600, the product of a church rate was made available and Sankey and Puckle agreed to raise the balance of £3,000.

When the church was stripped out the problem became obvious as it was easily seen that the foundations of the pillars had been undermined by grave-digging. After exhuming the remains of former parishioners the remains of a Roman bath house were discovered at a depth of about four feet. It was realised that the Norman arcades would have to be taken down and rebuilt on a stable foundation and in doing this it became necessary to pour in fifteen feet of concrete. The stones were numbered and replaced as before but there must have been a temptation to make the north and south the same height. The restorers were insistent, in spite of the builder's objections, that the early window in the chancel be replaced. As a guide I often take visitors up there to admire both the window itself and the image of the old "Invicta" ploughing across the channel. Many churches restored in the Victorian era were completely rebuilt, so one must be thankful that here the most interesting parts have been retained.

Sankey's enthusiasm was instrumental in getting the project under way, and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of a former Mayor, organised a bazaar at the Apollonian Hall in Snargate Street and raised £340 towards the £3,000 target. They must have succeeded in getting more than this as it was possible to raise the roof and put in clerestory windows which were not in the original plan. Services were maintained in the Maison Dieu until the reconsecration was completed in 1884.