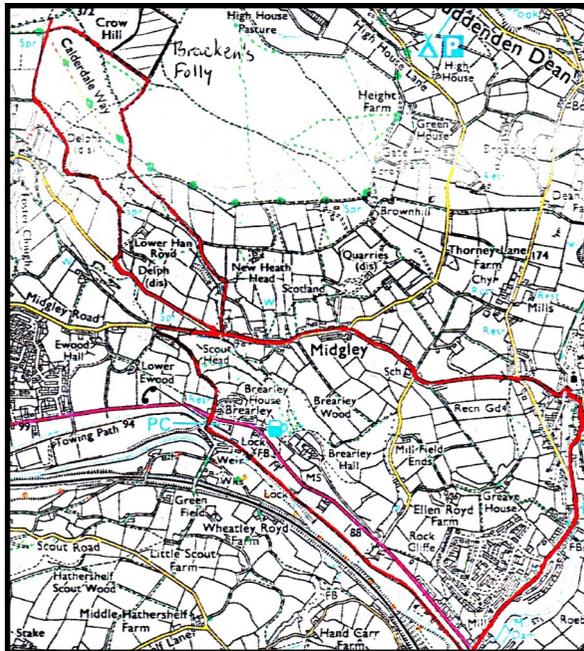


THE TOWNSHIP OF MIDGLEY



LUDDENDEN WALKS NUMBER 1

BACKGROUND

After the Romans left Britain in AD410, many people came over to Britain from the continent, particularly Angles and Saxons. Eventually, trees were cleared and village settlements began to form. Where trees had been cleared, the name of the settlement ended in –*leah* or *ley*. Two such clearings were *Werlafesley* i.e. Werlaf's clearing, later becoming Warley, and *Miclei*, later Midgley or the midge clearing. The first mention of Midgley occurs in the Domesday Book of 1086 where it is described as one of the 9 berewicks (outlying areas) of Wachefeld (Wakefield). The manor of Wakefield was granted by the King in 1107 to the Earl Warenne of Surrey, for services rendered during the Norman invasion and afterwards, but later in 1351, the manor of Midgley was sub-let, thus giving it its own court to settle small matters such as debts, trespass and land disputes.

The township would have a number of officials, the main ones being the grave (or greave), the constable, the churchwardens and the overseer of the poor. The greave organised township work, collected rents and fines, presented offenders to the main Wakefield manor court in Halifax and was basically the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield's steward. The constable's job was to maintain law and order, and minor misdemeanours were punished by putting the person in the village stocks. Stray animals found on the roads, or those taken in return for payment of fines were placed in the village pinfold, a round, stone enclosure. When the village school was built in Luddenden in 1819, lockups were incorporated in the building, one for the Midgley township and one for the Warley township. The Surveyor of the Highways was responsible for the state of the roads, and keeping pinfold and stocks in good repair.

The road through Midgley was one of the main packhorse routes from Yorkshire through to Lancashire and it was important it was kept passable. People occupying land at the side of the road were responsible for its upkeep, and roads needing repair were named at the Wakefield manor court in Halifax. These had to be completed by the time of the next court in six months time. Major bridges were the responsibility of the county. Luddenden bridge was rebuilt of stone in 1518 (this was celebrated in 2018), and the Midgley manor would have its own delf or small quarry.

The fourth official was the Overseer of the Poor, who was allowed to levy a poor rate on the annual value of land and buildings for the relief

of the poor. From about 1770, New Earth Head, a farmhouse on the edge of the moor was the Midgley workhouse, and it is still called Workhouse Farm by locals. For about 15 years after the Napoleonic wars of 1812–1825, there was much distress and unemployment, and the local Overseer put the able-bodied paupers to work on cutting out New Road from Carr Field to Duke Street in Luddenden to avoid the steep climb of the packhorse route up Old Lane. One of the local industrialists, Jonathan Bracken also had the idea of paupers cultivating Midgley moor for food. This was not a success, however, because it was too bleak, exposed to the weather and very poor soil, and it quickly became known as "Bracken's Folly" In 1894, Midgley Urban District Council was set up, but this was abolished in 1939, bringing to an end almost 900 years of Midgley being a separate administrative unit.

THE WALK

Distance 6.7 miles

Time 2.5–3.5 hours

Strenuousness Fairly strenuous with much up hill walking

Facilities 574 bus Halifax/Midgley, Community Shop in Midgley, Lord Nelson Inn in Luddenden Toilets at Car Park

Starting Point Car Park along Luddenden Lane

(OS Grid Reference 04168 25731)

The route is shown in red on the map on the front of the leaflet

DIRECTIONS

Turn left out of the car park and walk along the footpath until you reach a narrow pathway between the second and third pair of semi-detached houses along Lane House Grove. Go to the bottom of this to the old packhorse bridge over the river.

This bridge carried an old track from the Warley hillside over the river, across the road and up Greave House Fields towards Greave House (the house of the Greave) and on to Midgley. In the West Riding list of 1752, this was "repairable by Luddingden and Midgley" A map by Saxton of 1599 showed the old Luddenden corn mill across the river.

Retrace your steps back up the path and continue along the footpath to the left until you are opposite Kershaw House nursery.

Here, you will see an old boundary stone marking the boundary between Midgley Urban District and Luddendenfoot Urban District.

Continue down to Luddendenfoot and cross the main road. Go over the canal bridge and onto the canal towpath by the Old Brandy Wine pub, in the direction of Brearley to the left.

The Rochdale Canal was opened in 1798, with a wharf in Luddendenfoot at the Halifax side of the road bridge next to the houses. The canal is carried by an aqueduct (bridge) over the Luddenden brook, and the walk continues along the towpath to the bridge at Brearley. Along the way, you pass a spillway (overflow) where water can overflow into the river when there is heavy rain. A short way along, you will see Upper Foot House., across the canal on the right. This was built in 1659 on the site of a previous house, and during the building of the railway in 1840, it became an inn for navvies. A little way past there, you will see that the canal has been widened out. Boats brought coal from the Yorkshire coalfield and cotton from Lancashire to the mills at Luddendenfoot and Brearley. They would then turn round here in the turning circle and return with goods manufactured in the local mills. Just before Brearley, the stonework at the end of the lock has grooves down which wood could be slid to allow the canal to be emptied.

Leave the towpath just before the bridge at Brearley, and turn left down Brearley Lane to the bridge at the bottom.

The Midgley Manorial Corn Mill was on the left side of the river from about 1300 onwards until about 1850. All the corn grown in the manor had to be ground here for over 300 years.

Return up Brearley Lane to the main road at the top.

Number 14 was Brearley Mill Inn, and later, the Clarence Hotel, where the last Midgley Manorial Courts were held in the 1850s.

Carefully cross the main road at the top,.

To the right of the row of houses is Lower Brearley Hall. There was originally a timber house here, and wood from this was used in the present house built about 1600. The Lords of the Manor of Midgley lived here for many years. In 1586, John Lacy, the then Lord, was the richest person in the Halifax district, and more taxes were raised in the Midgley township than in Halifax.

Go up the front (left side) of the houses at Brearley Lane Top and take a well defined path upwards through the wood. Ignore right turnings, and you emerge onto a short tarmaced driveway and then Midgley road. Turn right up the road and then left at the top.

You are now on what was originally one of the very oldest packhorse routes through from Yorkshire into Lancashire. A short distance along, you come into a wooded area. The small field on the right

(now filled in) with the wire fencing down to the road was the Midgley Local Authority delph (quarry) at Hanroyd, from which stone was obtained for repairing the roads.

Just round the corner, turn right up the small road to Hanroyd. Bear left along a walled unmade track which leads to a gate on the edge of the moor. Ignore turnings to the right into the delphs but continue upwards to the standing stone Churn Milk Joan.

This is actually a boundary stone separating the manors of Midgley and Wadsworth. Tradition has it that people should always leave a copper or two in the depression in the top for needy travellers, and you may find something in here if you are lucky.

From Churn Milk Joan, take the narrow path through the heather to the right at the top of the track you came up—this goes round the right side of Crow Hill in front of you. If you appear to be heading straight over the top of Crow Hill you are on the wrong path. Alternatively, from Churn Milk Joan, missing out Bracken's Folly, you may retrace your steps downhill and then follow the waymarked Calderdale Way.

On the other side of Crow Hill, you will find Bracken's Folly, the enclosed area with walls all the way round which was cultivated . In the middle is now grass, rather than heather all around it.

From the corner of Bracken's Folly, continue straight on down the side of the wall. 75 metres from the far end, a path leads off to the right taking you back to the Calderdale Way marker. From the marker, go downwards to the left along the track until you come to an enclosed field. Bear right here from the Calderdale Way (which goes along the top of the field). Continue on the path alongside the wall at the lower side of the field, until eventually you come to a metalled road.

The large building up to the left on the hill is New Earth Head Farm, the old Midgley workhouse. 20 metres in front of you on the right is the round, stone-walled structure of the Midgley pinfold, where stray sheep were impounded by the Constable.

About 100 metres down the road, ignore the turning to the left, but go straight down the lane past the old Methodist Chapel and back to the main road through Midgley - Towngate.

A further 100 metres on the left, you will see a reconstruction of the old Midgley stocks.

Continue left along the main road down past the school until you get to a big junction where the road splits to Booth or Luddendenfoot

The road to Luddendenfoot is New Road, built between 1823 and 1825 by people receiving Poor Law benefits. Straight ahead is the old, setted (cobbled) packhorse route down Old Lane into the centre of Luddenden.

Go down Old Lane, but if it is wet, this may be very slippery. In this case you may go about 200 metres down New Road, then turn left by the old school and go down into the village.

At the bottom of Old Lane, you will see the old Luddenden Junior School. Just round the corner you will see the two small doors of the lockups for local miscreants from either Midgley or Warley. There is also a third unmarked door, which some people believe may have been a cell for people from other areas.

Continue downwards, through Luddenden village, over the 500 years old bridge, to the junction with Stocks Lane.

The Lord Nelson Inn was built in 1634. It's most celebrated patron was Branwell Bronte when he worked on the railway at Luddendenfoot. The river crossing was originally a ford, replaced by a wooden bridge and then in 1518 by the present bridge after a Halifax man, Richard Stancllyffe "bequeathed to the bylding of Luddingdene brige £10 if so they take upon hand to bilde the brigge of stone". The height of the bridge has been increased since then, but if you look over the river wall from the village green, you can see the original bridge. At the road junction, the packhorse routes from Bradford and Halifax met, and this is where the stocks are thought to have been sited.

Turn right, continue through the village past the junction with Halifax Lane, and eventually you come to the bottom of New Road and then back to the car park.

More information about the Luddenden valley can be obtained from the Telephone Box Mini-Information Centre at the bottom of Halifax Lane in the centre of Luddenden. A short film can also be viewed there. The box has been fitted out by the Luddenden Conservation Society, who have also constructed the Car Park, and produced these walks.