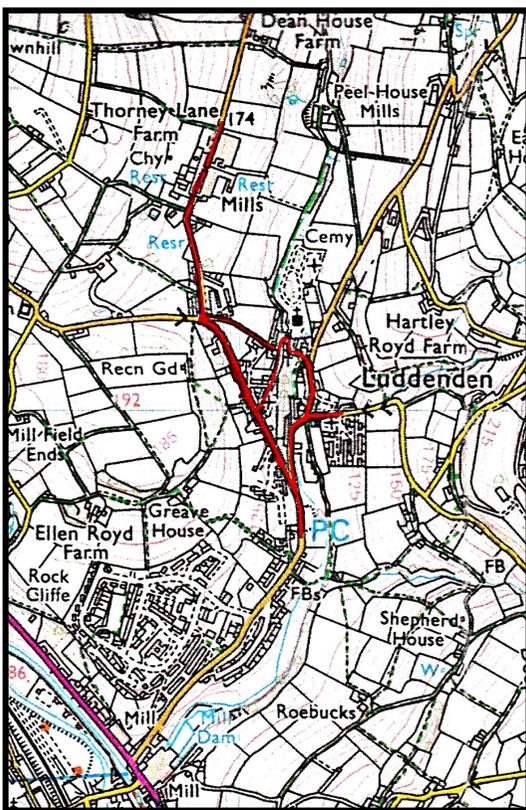


A WALK AROUND LUDDENDEN



LUDDENDEN WALKS NUMBER 2

BACKGROUND

The origin of the village was the growth of a settlement at the point the packhorse trails from Bradford and Halifax into Lancashire descended from the hills to cross the Luddenden brook. It is thought to take its name from Anglo-Saxons. Where they made extensive clearings in the woods, they established settlements which ended in *-ing*. Luddenden was often referred to in early maps as *Luddingden(e)*, which would mean *the clearing (ing) in the valley (dene) of the Ludd (loud river)*.

The fast-flowing river was exploited from early times, and the Warley corn mill was established by 1284 (possibly the earliest in the old Parish of Halifax). Before the 15th century, the area was pastoral, but then handloom weaving was established. The area must have been one of the richest in the country during the 17th century. There is said to be a greater number of old yeomen houses of this age on the slopes of the Luddenden valley than any other comparable area in the country. Handloom weaving and farming were dominant until the latter part of the 18th century. Up to this date, the village was confined to a small cluster of houses between the bridge and the church. This is shown on maps drawn by the most eminent mapmaker of his day, Christopher Saxton, in 1599 and 1601 for a court hearing over water rights.

By 1820, 4 water mills were established along the dene, and terraces of workers' houses were constructed along the hillsides. The church was rebuilt in 1815, and this was a clear illustration of the prosperity of this period.

New Road was cut out between 1823 and 1825, in a period of economic distress lasting for 10 years or so after the Napoleonic wars, by people from Midgley township who were on Poor Law relief. This allowed heavy loads to be transported more easily than going up Old Lane, the steep, settled packhorse route from the centre of the village. In 1847, the first steam-powered mill was established at Oats Royd, and large amounts of coal were now transported from the wharf on the canal at Luddendenfoot. More houses were required for workers, so development took place on the upper slopes of the valley above the old village, and large houses were built for mill owners or other gentry.

In the latter part of the 19th century, the village declined. The coalfields to the east and west were more favourable for industrial development, and the establishment of the Calder Valley railway

encouraged the development of Luddendenfoot at the expense of the old village. Finally, the relief of the valley bottom route from tolls spelt the death knell of the hilltop packhorse route, and with it Luddenden's position as a stopping place on an important through route. A slow, continual decline then lasted until the 1960s, and resulted in Luddenden being preserved as an urban village which illustrated the history of the industrial revolution perfectly. Since that time, it has become a mainly commuter village, and has lost all its shops, two schools, two chapels and a working mens' club. However, there is still an active, village spirit, demonstrated by Luddenden being declared the Best Village in England in 2011 in the national Village In Bloom competition. Groups such as the Conservation Society and Luddenden Mayor's group have actively campaigned on behalf of the village, such that it is now one of the most desirable villages in Calderdale.

THE WALK

Distance 1.7 miles

Time 1–1.5 hours

Strenuousness Easy

Facilities 574 bus Halifax/Midgley, Lord Nelson Inn, Toilets by 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 right out of the car park and after 50 metres, go up New Road at the junction.

New Road was cut out by inhabitants of Midgley Workhouse, as described earlier. About 50 metres up the road, you pass the entry to the Carr Field estate, which was built in the 1970s and 80s on the site of Carr Field House. This was demolished to make way for the estate. Its last occupant was the village Doctor, who held his surgeries at Carr Well, the next house up the road.

Turn right at the junction down High Street.

On the right at the top is the old Luddenden Infants School, opened in 1873. An Act of Parliament had made it compulsory for children working in the mills to attend school half time, which was mornings one week and afternoons the next. The school preferred mornings, as frequently children went to sleep, due to the fact they had often been working since 6a.m. Next to this is the former Midgley and Luddenden (originally Saint James's) Methodist Chapel. This was opened in 1903, as the previous

building, which you meet later, was considered to be too small. The chapel closed down in 2011. Across the road is Folly Cottage, where you can see an excellent example of a cellar dwelling, with its separate entry down some steps in front of the house. It consisted of one small room and a small scullery at the back, and in Victorian times was once home to 6 people. Further down the road is Granby House, which for many years was an inn - The Granby Arms. Below that lies the old Luddenden Junior School. This was opened by a Church of England Foundation in 1825 and like the Infants School, also closed in 1993 when a new school was built on the Kershaw Estate. A unique feature is the two cells below the school, one labelled Warley and the other Midgley. These were to house wrongdoers from the two townships, the Luddenden brook being the boundary between the two. There have been various suggestions as to what the third door on the left was used for. A possible solution is a cell for people who were not from these two areas, whilst they were locked up waiting for someone from their own township to come and collect them.

Retrace your steps up to New Road, turn right and continue up to the road junction at the top

Across from the Infants School is the old Luddenden Co-operative Society building, now converted into apartments. In the 1980s, a popular TV series *In Loving Memory*, starring Thora Hird was filmed in Luddenden, and what was a shop on the corner became an entrance to an undertakers. If you carefully look up above the entrance to the flats, you will see a stone giving the date, Luddenden Co-operative Society and motto *Man Know Yourself*. (Watch the road!)

If you now look at the houses up New Road, their approximate age can often be deduced from the material used on the roof. Blue Welsh slates were used from about 1850, with stone slates before that. Thorn View was made up of back to back houses, with a gallery around the back to get to the houses, and a row of 'underneath' houses at a lower level - a common design on the steep hillsides of the Calder Valley. Hillcrest was built by public subscription for a village nurse in 1934 (i.e. pre - NHS) and Wesley Villa was the home of the Methodist Minister. A tailor's shop was run from East View and 25 people worked in the cellars which ran underneath all 3 houses

At the junction, take the Booth road along Duke Street.

Below Duke Street, there was a mill where Railes Close now stands, and the mill dam where the grassed area runs parallel to Railes

Cottages. The dam on the left also fed the mill there. At the top of the hill, Mill House is 18th century, and next to this lies Oats Royd. This was the home of John Murgatroyd, the founder of Oats Royd mills, but is now 2 separate houses. Oats Royd mill until closure in 1982 had been one of the largest integrated worsted manufacturers in the West Riding. A fire in 1989 burnt down one building on the bottom side at right angles to the road, and the new building there is approximately the size and appearance of the old one. The whole complex has now been converted into apartments.

Retrace your steps back to the top of New Road, and turn left down Old Road, the setted road, down into the village. Be very careful, as this can be very slippery, particularly when wet. If so, you can go back down New Road, and down High Street again into the village.

Half way down Old Lane, Box House dates back to the 18th century, but timber frames in some of the walls probably make it one of the oldest houses in Luddenden. On the left is Church Hill, the houses dating back to 1820. There is a long row of windows on the upper floor at the front for hand loom weaving. At the beginning of the 20th century, two iron age beads were found in one of the gardens dating back to about 500B.C., showing either the presence of Celtic immigrants in the area or trade with them.

Turn left and continue through the village to the junction with Stocks Lane.

Around the corner, you will find the Lord Nelson Inn on your right, and the Church and War memorial on your left. The inn was built in 1634 (note the 4) as a house, but had become an inn by 1740. One of the first lending libraries was established there in 1781, and this was regularly frequented by Branwell Bronte, brother of the famous sisters, when he was a clerk on the railways at Luddendenfoot station. The present Church was built in 1815 on the site of an earlier 16th century building, more details of which are given in another walk. The Church will be open, and a small historical booklet is available. Continuing on through the village, you cross over the river on a stone bridge. Originally a ford, it was first replaced by a wooden bridge, and then in 1518 by the present stone bridge after a Halifax man, Richard Stancliff "bequeathed to the byldyng of Luddyngdene brige £10 if so be they bilde the brigge of stone".

Over the bridge, the building on the left just before the junction was

once a butcher's shop and slaughterhouse. The animals would enter from Stocks Lane and often had their head out of one of the top windows before they were dispatched. The building on the right was another public house, the Murgatroyd Arms, the licence of which was transferred to an inn in Skircoat Green, Halifax, when it closed. At the bottom of Stocks Lane, you will see the horse trough in the wall for refreshment for the many packhorses passing here on their way from Bradford or Halifax.

At the junction, continue to the right along High Street, which will take you back to the bottom of New Road and the car park

50 metres further on, the building on the left is the old Methodist Free Church. You can just make out the date 1837 when it was built above the door, and this is the one which closed down to be replaced by the one we saw earlier. Halifax Lane comes into High Street just past the old chapel, and you can see two heritage features constructed by the Luddenden Conservation Society. On the right is the lintel from the old Luddenden Corn Mill, with an interpretation board. You can just make out the date 1633, which is when Henry and Jane Murgatroyd re-built the mill. Across the road is the old rope drive wheel, which transmitted power to all the floors in Oats Royd mill from the steam engine, again with an interpretation board. This is the sole reminder of Luddenden's once hugely important textile industry. Just above this, opposite the playground, stands an older house below the modern bungalow, with large gates from the road. Originally two small houses, it was part of the first Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (a different branch of the Methodist Church from the Free Methodist Church already seen). This was built in 1812, and demolished in 1961. Continuing along High Street you will pass more old mills. The Bluebell Estate was built on the site of Lindley's Nut and Bolt works, demolished in the 1970s. Continue along for another 200 metres, when you return to New Road, and then the car park.

More information about the Luddenden valley and a short film can be obtained from the Telephone Box Mini-Information Centre at the bottom of Halifax Lane in the centre of Luddenden.

Copyright held by the author Rodney Collinge