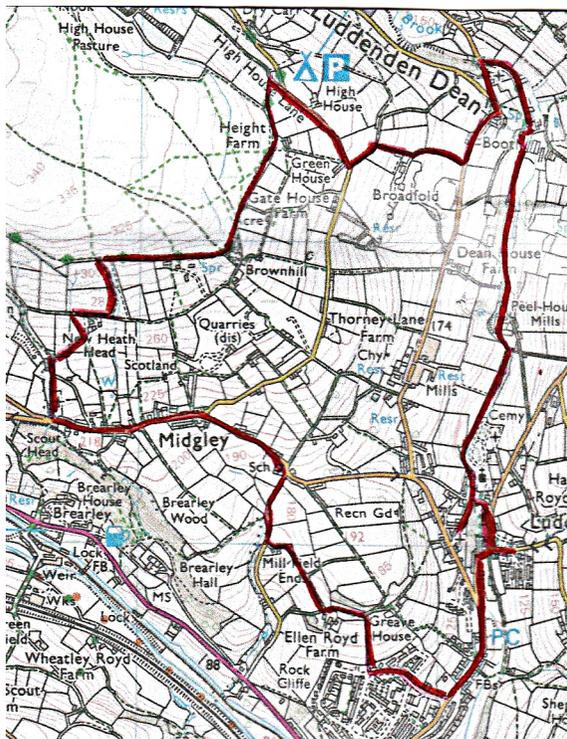


# CHURCHES OF THE LUDDENDEN VALLEY



## LUDDENDEN WALKS NUMBER 5

### BACKGROUND

There are two types of church that have existed in the Luddenden valley - the Church of England (Anglican), and the Non-Conformist churches. The Anglican Church is the established state church and originated when King Henry the Eighth broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534. Non-Conformist churches are those which conform to the same beliefs (not Roman Catholic) as the Anglican church, but have different services and organisation. Until 1685, they were illegal, but in that year Parliament legalised them by passing what was known as the Toleration Act.

#### CHURCH OF ENGLAND - ST. MARY'S

The date of building the first church in Luddenden is not known, but a licence for a priest was given in 1496. It was probably sited somewhere near Kershaw House, the original name of which was Kirkshaw, *the house in or near the church wood*. The next church which was built on the present site was built sometime before 1599, as it appears on a map of Luddenden of that date. The priest was not allowed to baptise, marry or bury people until 1624, when it was compulsory to go to Church on Sunday. During the civil war around 1650, fonts for baptism and churchyard crosses were thought to be very Roman Catholic. Scottish Parliamentarian troops returning to Halifax after a battle at Heptonstall are thought to have thrown out and broken the font and cross. The font was found in the garden at Ellen Royd House at the beginning of the 20th century (you will see both this and the base of the cross on the walk). By the early 1800s, the building was becoming very unsafe, so it was demolished in 1816 and the present church erected on the same site.

#### NON-CONFORMIST CHURCHES

There are a number of different non-conformist churches, each with their own method of administration and slightly different beliefs. The ones which had a chapel in the Luddenden valley were Congregational, Methodist and Baptist. All were the faith of people dedicated to hard work, thrift and competition, and the accumulation of wealth (though not extravagance of its display). These were seen as the outward signs of virtue, and unsurprisingly these churches were those of the working classes who by dint of hard work had bettered themselves.

In the early 19th century, the Anglican Church could only seat about 13% of the adult population, so large numbers of the non-conformist churches were built in every small village or hamlet to cater for the remainder. The most active was the Methodist Church, founded by John Wesley in the 18th century. By the 1800s, however, it had split into a number of slightly different branches, which often had chapels next door to each other. There was a Congregational chapel at Booth, Methodist Chapels at Luddenden (2) Midgley, Luddendenfoot and Luddenden Dean and Baptist at Butts Green. All of these have now closed down, the last in 2011.

### THE WALK

**Distance** 10.5 km. (6.5 miles)      **Time** 3 to 4 hours  
**Strenuousness** Medium to strenuous. Initially quite a climb  
**Facilities** Lord Nelson Inn. Open weekdays from 4pm, weekends from 12 noon. Midgley community shop. Toilets in car park.  
574 bus Halifax - Midgley  
**Starting Point.** Car Park along Luddenden Lane  
(O.S. Grid reference 04168 25731)  
The route is shown in red on the map on the front of the leaflet.

### DIRECTIONS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHURCHES

*Turn left out of the car park and walk along as far as Kershaw House*

The present house was built around 1640, but a previous house Kirkeschawe is mentioned as early as 1307. This suggests a church around there at that time, and there is a small, probably pre-reformation, oratory or private chapel over the porch,

*Cross the road and go up Kershaw Crescent as far as  
Number Take the path up the field on the right. At the top, turn left along the farm track for about 100 metres, until you come to a junction with a track along to the right.*

The house on the left at the junction is Ellen Royd, where the St. Mary's font, which had been thrown out by the Scottish troops, was found in the garden.

*Turn right along the track until you reach the road at Mill Field End. Turn right along the road until you reach the main road at the top. Turn left here (along Jim Allen Lane) up the road into Midgley village. Continue along the road for 0.6 km. through the village to Chapel Lane.*

The first Methodist Chapel in Midgley (Union Chapel) was built in 1819. From the beginning, reading and writing were taught, as there was no school in the village until 1877. This became too small, so in 1883 it was demolished and a new Chapel (Providence) was built on the same site. This closed down in 1994 and was converted into apartments.

Turn right up Chapel Lane. Bear left at Midgley Hall Farm onto a rough track leading upwards. Continue along this track as it turns a corner to the right, ignoring the footpath to the left. This is Workhouse Lane, and shortly after the house (which was once the Midgley Workhouse) is a junction at the top of a small rise with a metal gate to the left.

Turn left here at the corner of the wall and follow the path uphill to the right of the wall and fence. (It may be a bit wet and boggy here at times, so appropriate footwear should be worn). This leads to a stile with a waymark post leading onto the moor. Cross the stile and turn right along the Calderdale Way for about 1 kilometre (just over half a mile). After passing a large house with solar panels the path bears to the left before running alongside a tarmac lane. Climb over the stile by the metal gate to join the lane, turn left and down to a junction.

Turn right along the road as far as the row of houses on the right, and then left down a bridleway where it joins the road (there are some steps but these are best avoided). After 100 metres turn right down a stone setted lane (take care when wet!), bear left between the houses and down to Booth. Turn left along the road and continue along it to the bottom of Booth Hill.

Halfway down Booth Hill, you come to the site of Booth chapel, (see photograph). The first building is the Minister's house (The Manse) built in 1823. Down the hill below the Manse was a second chapel (1828), which like the first on the same site became too small. At the bottom side of these was the third Chapel (1869), which was described by an eminent architectural historian as "the dominant feature in the village - like some miniature cathedral". Unfortunately, it closed down a few years before it had become the vogue to convert such buildings to other uses. The remaining surviving building, the 1851 Sunday School, is also now apartments. Calderdale council recently announced a small part of the graveyard will be used for natural woodland burials.

Turn right at the bottom of the hill along Goit Side. Continue straight on for almost 1.5 km taking no roads or tracks to right or left, and you will come out in the centre of Luddenden, by the Lord Nelson.

Go into the St. Mary's Churchyard by the bottom entrance below the War Memorial. Halfway along the path to the

the Church on the left, you will see the octagonal stone base of the Churchyard cross, broken by the Parliamentary forces during the civil war. There is an interesting chest tomb with the Murgatroyd arms let into the top in the grassed area. The Church itself is usually open to visitors from (about) 10am until 6pm. The early font which was broken is on the left at the front of the Church by the altar, and its 1662 replacement on the left at the rear as you enter. The remainder of the Church is worth a good look around before you leave. On your way out along the upper path to the right, set into the west wall at the top of the old graveyard are two stone human masks. These probably survive from the first Church, and were there to ward off any evil spirits.

When you come out onto the roadway, go up High Street (with the Lord Nelson on your left) for about 100 metres where you will see one of the three ex-Methodist Churches in the village.

On the right at the top of the first steep section is the old Luddenden Junior School. This was built by a Church of England educational foundation and opened in 1823. It closed down in 1993 when a new school was built on the Kershaw Estate. Two lockups for the village constable were built into it, one for miscreants from the Midgley township and the other for those from the Warley township. The Luddenden brook is the border for the two old townships (see walk 1) The use to which the third door was put is not known, although some people think it may have been for people from more distant townships. Each township was responsible for their own inhabitants, and they were maybe put there until their own village constable came to fetch them and take them home.

Further up the hill, you will come to what was the St. James's Methodist Chapel. This was built in 1903 and closed down in 2011. It has now been excellently converted into two separate houses. Above that, you will see the old Luddenden Infants School. When half time education became compulsory, the junior school did not have sufficient space for everyone, so a second school was built in 1870.

Turn round and go back down the hill, and continue through the village to the junction with Stocks Lane. Turn right and continue for 50 metres.

The building on the left is the earlier building of the St. James's Chapel. This was built in 1837, when one of the Methodist splits occurred. The earlier Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (which you will see next across the road) was seen as too undemocratic. Methodism relied on local lay preachers to take the services and do much of the work. Many of these, however, were penniless and receiving no help, so a large breakaway took place to form what was called the Wesleyan

Association, and this was always the main church of the working classes. By the 1890s, the building was too small, so St. James's Chapel was built across the valley, and this disposed of.

Continue along the road for 50 metres, and then turn left Up Halifax Lane for a further 50 metres.

On your left is the playground. Until the 1950s, there were streets of houses here. One of these in 1787 was converted to a small preaching house. In 1812, a Chapel called Ebenezer Chapel was built across the road for the Wesleyan Methodists when the preaching house became too small. In 1864, a larger Sunday School building was built, attached to the Chapel (see photograph). At that time, over 350 children were registered members of the Sunday School, and it was the only place where most of them were taught to read and write.

If you stand with your backs to the railings of the playground, the new bungalow at the top left is on the site of the Sunday School. The gates were the main entrance to the Chapel (below the Sunday School on the photograph), and the lower house (originally two houses) were for Chapel workers such as the caretaker. Behind the two houses is a small, closed graveyard.

If you now return to the road at the bottom of the hill, turn left, continue through the village to the junction with New Road. A further 100 metres to the left along Luddenden Lane you arrive back at the car park.



Booth Chapel



Ebenezer Chapel

*The Methodist Chapel at Luddenden Dene has not been included here as it would have increased the length of the walk substantially. The graveyard is the only part remaining, but it includes the well-known grave of orphans and other young girls from Liverpool who had been brought to work in the factory at Wainstalls. They were very well treated here, and had a much better life than they would have had in Liverpool, with many staying for the rest of their lives. It can be reached by car down the hill from Wainstalls, past the Cat l'th Well Inn.*

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A booklet **Non-Conformist Chapels of the Luddenden Valley** is available from the author, Rodney Collinge (phone 01422 885141)