

THE LUDDENDEN VALLEY

ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE LUDDENDEN VALLEY

The Luddenden valley has probably a more continuous history than any other area in Calderdale. Collections of flints and tools from the middle stone age (Mesolithic period) have been found at points shown on the map labelled (M), and from the near stone age (Neolithic period) at points (N). There have been many Bronze Age finds, shown at points (B), including barrows and earthworks at High Rough and on Midgley Moor, and also on the eastern side of the valley and at Tower Hill. Celtic beads from the Iron Age have been found in Luddenden (I) and banked enclosures existed at Tower Hill (TH) and Moor End near Mount Tabor. A Roman road from Manchester came up through Butts Green, along the top of the eastern side of the valley, through Wainstalls and beyond to Ilkley.



PACKHORSE ROUTES

The first turnpike road along the Calder Valley was not built until the 1760s, and the main routeways were the packhorse trails. The steep climbs, like that up Old Lane (from Luddenden village up to the top of New Road) made the packhorse routes unsuitable for wheeled vehicles, so goods were carried by trains of packhorses. The main packhorse route was from Halifax over Roils Head and down Halifax Lane, over the river and up to Midgley, then beyond to Hebden Bridge, Heptonstall and over to Burnley.



THE 17TH CENTURY

The area gained much of its character in the 17th century, when it was probably one of the richest areas in the country. Many of the inhabitants carried on both handloom weaving and farming, and cloth was exported all over Britain and Europe. Many people involved with the sale of the cloth became extremely rich, and built the large houses which can be seen all along both sides of the valley.



OLD HOUSES

The Luddenden valley is an excellent place in which to study the different styles of housing. There are more old seventeenth century houses along both sides of the valley than any other area of similar size in the country. These were built by yeoman farmers, who both farmed and manufactured wool textiles. They usually included an upper floor workshop. Excellent examples can be seen from the road at Kershaw House (K), Peel House (P), Hartley Royd (H) and Great House in Midgley (G). During the second half of the 19th century, many of the millowners built large houses from their profits. Examples are Oats Royd (OR), Broadfold (BF) in Booth, Thorn Bank (TB) at the top of New Road, and Laurel Bank (LB) up Stocks Lane. Workers' housing is also interesting, and the terrace of houses at Church Hill shows the many windows on the top floor needed by handloom weavers to carry on their work. Straight across from the Methodist Chapel is a cellar dwelling down some steps, and up New Road can be seen what were back-to-back houses with a gallery round one side to get to the door, and dwellings underneath.



LUDDENDEN VILLAGE

Luddenden is thought to date back to Anglo-Saxon times. It is often referred to on old maps as Ludd-ing-dene ie the settlement or clearing (ing) in the valley (dene) of the Ludd or Loud river. The river is the boundary between the townships of Warley and Midgley, and the old village lock ups, so labelled, can be seen underneath the old school at the bottom of Old Lane. Houses and flats are now built on the site of the old Warley Corn Mill in the village centre, and the old dam can be seen behind the houses along High Street. The river was originally crossed by a ford, followed by a wooden bridge, and finally a stone bridge, built in the middle of the 16th century. The Lord Nelson Inn was built in 1634 and converted to a pub in the 18th century. Its most famous customer was Branwell Bronte, who used to drink there and use the attached library, when he was booking clerk at Luddendenfoot station. The village declined greatly during the 20th century, until in 1974, it was declared a conservation area. Since then, it has become a very popular dormitory for workers in the towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

MILLS



Towards the end of the 18th century, various inventions produced an enormous expansion in the textile industry. Early mills were small, and were powered by water. Mills using water wheels built dams above the mill to give a steadier water supply. These can be seen at Wainstalls (W), Jowler (J), Holme House Bridge (HH). Three reservoirs above Wainstalls at Cold Edge supplied the water, but the small mills gradually closed down. Further developments in machinery led to very large mills powered by steam. Two of these were at Oats Royd (OR), (belonging to John Murgatroyd) and at Wainstalls. The Oats Royd mills integrated all the processes on one site and were some of the biggest in Yorkshire.

CHURCHES



The Luddenden valley has contained many Churches and Non-conformist Chapels, most of which are now closed down, but whose remains can still be seen. The first Church of England was probably built in the middle of the 16th century, and the present Church was built in 1816. The earliest Non-conformist chapel (Congregational) was built at Booth in 1761, and demolished in 1980. Two of the buildings can still be seen down Booth hill, also the minister's house (manse) and the graveyard. Methodist Chapels existed at the bottom of Halifax Lane in Luddenden (the gates are still there opposite the playground), at what was Luddenden Club, now flats, by the playground (the date can be seen above the door, 1837), at the junction of New Road and High Street (still in existence), at Midgley (now flats), and also at Luddenden Dean (demolished after a fire, but graveyard still there). A small Baptist Chapel was also present at Butts Green (BG) and again the graveyard is still there.

THE TOWNSHIP OF MIDGLEY

The old township was bordered by water - the river Calder, Foster Clough and the Luddenden brook. In the Domesday book, it was referred to as Miclei. Lower Brearley Hall was the original manorial house, and dated back to the 14th century. The manor pinfold (PF) is at Greenroyd and the old workhouse was at New Earth Head (WH) just below the moor.



NATURAL HISTORY

The valley contains many birds, animals and plants to be seen at all times of the year. Common unusual birds to look out for include duck, heron, kestrels, lapwings, curlews, jays, grouse (on the moors), and kingfishers. In spring, the damper areas of the valley are covered with wild garlic, and the dock *bistort* is collected by locals for making into Dock Pudding. In summer, bilberries can be collected in many spots along the valley. In Wade wood, all kinds of plants can be seen. In the Autumn, there are large numbers of fungi, many of which are edible. Also present in Wade wood are the remains of old charcoal burning circles.

