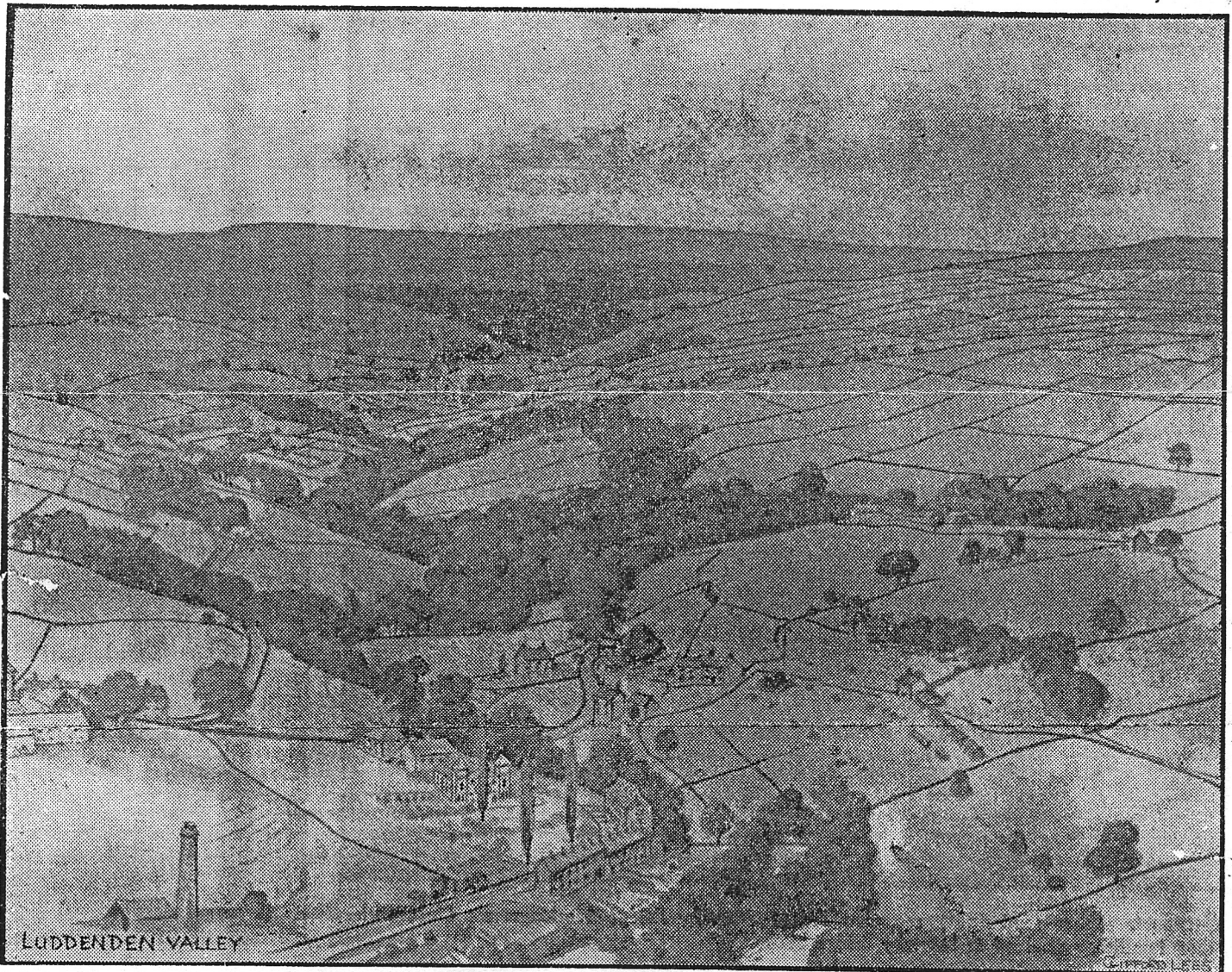


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2ND SEPT 1961

Our Green Valleys . . . No. 2



LUDDENDEN VALLEY

LUDDENDEN VALLEY is narrow and winding, a green wedge steeply cut into the dark moors. If we take the Wain-talls bus to Stocks Lane we soon look down on the coloured pattern of fields marked out by stone walls and small woods rising up from the stream. Here the hamlet of Booth lies directly below us.

Further down, where the road takes an S-bend, we find Peel House, dated 1598, surely one of the oldest houses in the district, with rounded heads to its many windows.

Down, down goes the road, straight into the village. Many people will remember the Luddenden of forty years ago. My boyhood memory is of a cobbled way that snaked up and down, curving left then right, dipping and twisting between tall buildings like some fantastic corridor in a giant's castle.



The road slips somehow over a stream, turns again and rises to reach at length a little triangular space in front of the church. There's a grocer's shop at one side, a butcher's at the other, a greengrocer's behind you and the gates of the churchyard ahead. Here stands the War Memorial where, on Remembrance Day, the children from the school gather to sing a hymn and keep the Two Minutes Silence. Shopkeepers would come to their doors, a few elderly shoppers paused to watch.

Naturalist and artist **CLIFFORD LEES** takes you on a walk through

Luddenden Dean

and recalls the finding of a strange bird from China

It was so small and simple; the tall trees in the churchyard stood so still, the stream murmured so softly. Standing in that tiny "square," this microcosm, you felt, epitomised a nation of people—remembering.

Beyond the village, which is just ahead, Kershaw House stands beside Luddenden Lane. An old parchment, dated 1631, says that James Murgatroyd, Gent., lived there, but that would probably be a half-timbered house replaced in 1650 by the present stone building. This has 11 gables, and over the south porch a fine rose window. How many houses built today will stand so well in 311 years?

The pathway up the valley runs along one side of the stream, with the churchyard, lovely as a garden on the other. It wanders by a ruined mill to Booth, and so to Wade Wood.

This little beauty spot has been a favourite resort of Halifax

people for many years. It is lovely in spring, at bluebell time, and a good place for the botanist any time of year. There are bog plants, woodland species and some rarities in nearby fields. Moonwort used to be found here and adder's tongue, while on the Midgley side two kinds of gentian were once gathered by the villagers as herbal remedies.

Years ago (1880) both bullfinch and goldfinch nested here and as recently as 50 years ago Water-worth described woodlarks and yellow wagtails as breeding birds. All these are now absent or very rare.

In 1902, a strange bird was seen in Luddenden Dean. About the size of a thrush, it was clad in a gay harlequin garb of yellow, black and golden brown splashed with crescents of white. This proved to be a White's Thrush, rare wanderer from China named after the famous naturalist, Gilbert White. It was shot, of

course, and is now in Belle Vue Museum, Halifax. Unfortunately, it is still true that if a bird is beautiful it is likely to be shot. When shall we learn to conserve natural beauty?

Following the path to Throstle Bower, we soon reach the lodge of Castle Carr, which takes us to the other side of the valley. This upper part is very peaceful, the silence being accentuated rather than broken, by the lonely cry of a curlew, the bleating of sheep or guttural call of grouse on the moor above.



We cannot leave without a brief mention of Castle Carr. Begun in 1859 and taking 12 years to build, it is a massive structure with huge blocks of local stone in its towering walls, the front hung with a curtain of ivy like a vast leafy tapestry. Many people will have enjoyed a trip here at Whitsuntide to see the fountains throwing water 100 feet into the air.

In June, this year, it was announced that the present owners thought that it would have to be pulled down. We should regret such a fate overtaking this impressive building, but how could it be preserved?

With the question still in mind we turn and follow the rough road back to Booth and the bus which takes us home.

● Next week—Shibden.